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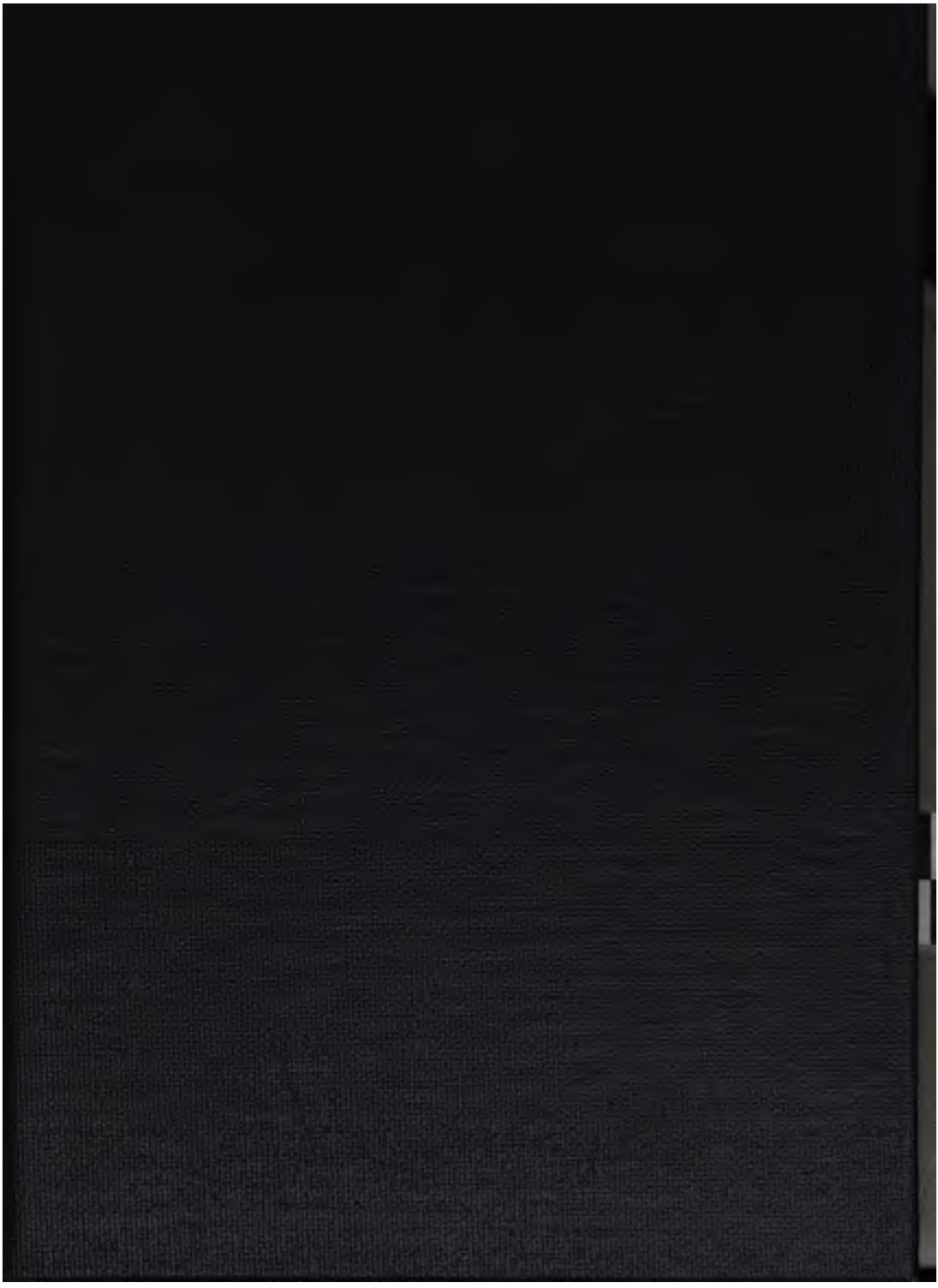

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WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING.

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING:

A Centennial Memory.

BY
CHARLES T. BROOKS.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

BOSTON:
ROBERTS BROTHERS.
1880.

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The path of the just is as the dawning light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Great peace have they that love Thy law, and nothing shall offend them.

Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

Behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.

PREFACE.

I HAVE tried to write this little book in the spirit of simplicity, truthfulness, and even-handed justice which so strikingly characterized its illustrious subject.

The want of a popular life of Channing in one handy volume has long been felt, and oftener expressed, by those, not only in his own but in other denominations, who have known the man only or chiefly through his writings. As one contribution toward the supply of that want, this compend is offered to the public.

Although so short and succinct an account of so full and rich a life may well seem, and must needs be, in some respects a meagre outline, still this small volume professes not to be a mere dry summary,

for it aims to let the reader, so far as possible, see and hear the man himself, as he is imaged in his own words, especially in significant passages from his familiar correspondence.

Some reminiscences of Channing will be found in these pages which have not appeared elsewhere. The whole account of his relation to the Unitarian Church in Newport will, in particular, be new, and it is hoped, interesting to most readers. One other feature of this book, which, perhaps, will not be unacceptable, is its bringing together some of the significant expressions and echoes from different denominations and foreign nations of Channing's world-wide influence.

The following account of Dr. Channing's life and writings makes no pretension (it need hardly be said) to any philosophic novelty, to giving any new estimate of his position, services, or character. Of course most of the external facts herein related will be found scat-

tered through the pages of William Henry Channing's three rich and eloquent biographical volumes. These have thus far been the source from which all brief biographies of their subject have drawn almost all their material. Indeed they are a precious mine of spiritual gems, — a field and sky of large and lofty thought and kindling sentiment which it would be hard to match in the whole range of religious literature. But to the student of Dr. Channing's life the work has this inconvenience, that the unfortunate plan the author has perhaps almost necessarily adopted, of crowding his pages with extracts from sermons and letters, arranged according to subjects instead of chronological order, prevents the reader from getting (what is so very important a business of the biographer to furnish or to further) a view of the gradual growth of the man's mind and the formation of his opinions.

Mr. Channing intimates that he has left unused many more of those documents

illustrative of his uncle's inner and outward life, which he has so largely drawn from in his Memoir. While grateful for what has been printed from those private papers, of meditations, confessions, and studies, we only wish we might some day have the whole of what would surely prove such bright and honorable illustrations of a spirit yearning for perfection.

It is earnestly to be hoped that the world may one day have a chronologically arranged collection of Dr. Channing's ordinary sermons of the earlier periods of his ministry. Or, if that is no longer possible, may we not hope, at least, to see a complete and chronological arrangement of his familiar correspondence? For one of the most instructive and inspiring traits of his history is the mingled freedom and reverence with which he "followed after" truth. Well might he too have adopted those words of Sir William Jones, so touchingly appropriated by another and still living venerable teacher of our liberal faith, in

the preface to his Divinity School Lectures: —

> "Before thy mystic altar, heavenly Truth,
> I kneel in manhood, as I knelt in youth;
> So let me kneel, till this dull frame decay,
> And life's last shade be brightened by thy ray."

That the prayer of this last line may be fulfilled to the beloved and revered survivor of the generation of Channing and Ware and Norton is the fervent wish of the grateful pupil who dedicates to him this book.

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING.

Thoughts at the Closing of the Centenary. — A hundred years have gone — say, rather, have *come*, with their vast accessions of light and quickening — since that life began on earth of which it is the purpose of these pages to repeat the leading facts, and emphasize some of the principal lessons. It may well be questioned whether these hundred years — or, indeed, any hundred years since the Master left the earth — have bequeathed to the world a more pure and perfect example of the combination of qualities that entitles its possessor to be called "a man of the Beatitudes."

Difficulty of the Biographer's Task. — But the clearness and completeness of a character by no

means make it the easier to portray. There are two different kinds of men that, for opposite reasons, are continually tempting age after age to do its best to analyze and characterize them: the one is the class to which such men as Cromwell belong, eluding our grasp by a certain obscurity of life or language; the other includes men like Washington, the very roundness and transparency of whose being make them the despair of the biographical portrait-painter, who would avoid common-place, and do justice to the individuality of his subject.

Channing an Inspiring Theme. — In this latter class we place Channing. His is one of those natures which it is easier to discern than to describe. And it is one which discloses new beauty and value as it is approached from new directions. Channing, like his great Master, is a "prophet of the soul," whose word has had new meanings and applications for each new generation, and will have for generations to

And hence it is that this closing year of the century since his birth has already stirred up so many minds, not only within but without the pale of his own denomination, to try to express their idea and impression of his genius, his work, and his worth; and the approaching centenary will awaken in many more hearts, especially of such as have personally known this wise and saintly man, an earnest desire to express their grateful and reverent sense of his rare service to truth and humanity, and add their offerings of love and veneration to the wreath which a generation has been intwining around his memory.

The fast-dwindling number whose privilege it was to enjoy the personal acquaintance of this heavenly-minded man will naturally yearn to transmit to the coming generation something of the impression left upon them by the look and voice which make the printed pages to them a mirror not only of the spiritual form, but of the remembered face of him who, while it was only a written page, bent thoughtfully over it.

Discouragement and Encouragement in attempting a Fresh Biography. — It is with a mingled feeling of satisfaction and misgiving that the present writer has let himself be persuaded to set his hand to the work of putting into the shape of a biographic sketch his knowledge, thoughts, and reminiscences of a master so beloved and revered.

On the one hand, to have lived more than half one's life in the place of Channing's birth; to have walked for forty years the streets with which his youthful steps were familiar, and daily looked upon the house in which he first saw the light; to have roamed the shores along which he so loved to wander; to have stood for more than a generation in the pulpit he dedicated; to have seen and heard, during the last five years of his life, the *prophet in his own home and country;* and to have dwelt ever since amidst scenes made even more lovely by the lingering light of his remembered countenance, — all this experience may well seem to make it not only one's right, but duty, to add his

testimony to the already vast accumulation of tributes which this centennial hour will crown.

And yet when one thinks how many eloquent, just, and worthy tributes to Channing's memory; how many luminous expositions of the spirit and significance of his life, from so many different points of view and in both hemispheres, have already, since his translation, been given to the world; and how thoroughly and transparently he has painted in his writings his own spiritual likeness, — all this may well make the most enthusiastic disciple hesitate to add another word to the many that have been so well and worthily spoken on the fruitful theme.

Nevertheless it is an encouragement, again, to the most diffident disciple, in contributing his mite in this case, to observe how even one acute and enlarged mind after another still labors, at this advanced day, to effect, by a renewed estimate, a more complete appreciation of Channing's work, not only in its relation to the

period in which he lived, but in its bearing upon some of the most serious problems of the present day and hour.

Channing's Autobiography. — Channing, we have said, has in a sense written his own life. This is eminently true of him, as it is of many another great man, of Wordsworth for example. His *works* (well may such writings be so named) are his life's work. And *if* we could have *all* his writings in our hands, in chronological order, — sermons, essays, letters, journals, — and *if* we would read, study, and inwardly digest all this material, then we should be very near to having a full picture of the life of the man; I say, *very near*, for there would still be needed, to complete it, one thing if not two things, more: first, a record of his conversation, his private walk and talk; and secondly, — a very important part, in one sense, of a man's real life, — a gathering up of the reproductions of himself in the souls with which he has had personal communion.

At all events, if a man's life includes that which he lives on earth after he has left it (and it is hard to avoid making it do so), then, certainly, it ought not to seem strange that some men's biographies should be many times rewritten, and that we should be in the way to get repeated accessions to our perfect understanding of them, by looking at them in the mirrors of different minds.

What it is to write a Life. — Properly to write the life of any man is a twofold task. It is not only to tell the story of what he was and did, enjoyed and suffered, in the outer world, but to trace, so far as it can be gathered from his words and deeds, and his whole "conversation in the world," the history of the inner man. This is eminently true if the subject of the biography was a man of thought, and his life was a life of study; and pre-eminently is it so when we have to do with one of those spiritual and saintly men whose life was "hid with Christ in God," whose "conversation" was "in heaven"

even while they walked on the earth. And in this last case the very transparency of the character may make it all the harder to describe, individualize, and differentiate; what we feel ever so strongly and distinctly, we may find it almost impossible to express even to our own satisfaction. Moreover, it is one thing to tell what a man was, and another thing to trace out how he came to be what he was; in other words, to tell how in his person the universal became individual.

In Channing's Case, a threefold Task.—All this is strikingly verified in the case of a man like Dr. Channing, who was at once so universal and so individual, so profound and so simple, so clear and so full, with a self so marked and peculiar, and at the same time so large and comprehensive. Every new attempt from year to year to set forth the meaning and merit of his word and work adds a new illustration both of the attractiveness of the theme and of the difficulty of the task.

But indeed, in one sense, what we have called a twofold task might in a case like this be said to be threefold. For the life of a Channing ends not, even on earth, with his departure from this world. 'And whoso would write his life has to follow and keep up with a presence and an influence still living and growing in the world of thought, in human souls and society.

Channing's Earthly Immortality.—It is one mark of a great soul that, like the heavenly luminaries which keep along with the traveller in his nightly journeying, it moves on abreast and even ahead of the advancing generations, an ever-present incitement and guidance. Even so the pure flame of Channing's spirit still accompanies us, as the years roll on,—an angelic presence with quickening and regulating power, a burning and a shining light.

Channing's Life speaks Cheer to Young and Old. — In undertaking to tell over again the story of Dr. Channing's life, a special object has been

to make a book that should interest and instruct the young people, but not them alone. Both to young and old that life is full of invaluable lessons, — to the young as illustrating a boyhood and youth lovely and truly venerable; to the elders as a rare example of one who grew younger as he grew older, — "always young for liberty," as he once said in manhood; always young for Nature, as he often said, and was constantly showing without saying it, in the very latest years of life, when he looked on the face of the great Mother and leaned on her bosom with a childlike devotion; always young for Truth, and in her service nobly verifying those words of the Prophet: "The youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." How wonderfully does this unquenchable ardor of aspiration after truth and perfectness shine out in the copious correspondence that so largely

occupied the last decade of his outwardly failing but inwardly brightening and broadening life! The life of Channing is eminently fitted to edify the young in manly virtue by its winning exhibition of the harmony of true manliness and true godliness, and it is equally fitted to help the old renew their youth at the fountain of inspiration which for ever springs up for them who dwell in the mount of faith.

•

Channing's Life not merely a past Subject. — Channing has long since gone up from that mount of faith into the heaven of the open vision, and one who sits down to recall and record the impression of what he was in the days of his earthly pilgrimage, can hardly write of the life he then lived without seeing it transfigured through the glow of the large and lofty life to which he has ascended; and, while looking out upon the beauteous light and landscape from which he drew so much inspiration, can hardly feel it an exaggeration to say, —

"He is made one with Nature; there is heard
His voice in all her music . . .
He is a presence to be felt and known,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own;
Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath and kindles it above."

"He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely."

In a word, when we speak of the life of such a man, — a true man of God, one eminently full of the Spirit, — we cannot feel that we are speaking merely of a thing of the past. Well has it been said of this man:[1] "Several lives are given to him." Indeed, besides the eternal life in heaven on which we feel that he has entered, he lives here on earth a continued life in every heart which his word has quickened. And no one can truly write his life except so far as that life is written and reproduced by the Spirit (the source of all life) in his own heart.

And so we are tempted, "forgetting the things which are behind," to go on and on,

[1] In Dr. Hall's eulogy, referring to an expression once used by Dr. Channing, "that he needed several lives to do what he felt he had to do."

meditating the continued and growing life of Channing in the progress of the truths, the principles, the spirit he was seeking to write out and work out, more and more fervently, as he approached the close of his earthly existence; and even the hundredth anniversary of his birth into this world sends our thoughts upward and onward to that second and higher birth of his spirit into the heavenly state of a still more exalted and enlarged work for God and humanity. Still, it is profoundly true that the actions and events of the past had in them a living soul, by which they still live and are ever renewing their life in the memory of men; and so, even at this distance of time, as the days which are said — by an almost impossible figure — to have "joined the *past eternity*" move along with us in our pilgrimage, it is a good thing for us to recur to the train of events, external and internal, by which the soul of Channing was educated to that holy ministry which it still exercises in the minds and hearts of men, — that living picture, which, however

familiar, will be always fresh and beautiful to those certainly who love to contemplate "the life of God in the soul of man."

The purpose and plan of this little book is, first, to trace the principal steps and stages of Channing's outward and inward life by the help of public record and personal reminiscence, and after that to present some reflections on the meaning that life has for us to-day, some of the great lessons it utters to the present and coming generations.

Channing fortunate in his Birthplace. — William Ellery Channing was born at Newport, in (and on) Rhode Island, the 7th of April, 1780. We pause here to note that this very first circumstance of his earthly life, the *place* of his nativity, has a providential significance. We are sometimes told, when we make account of a great man's place of birth, he *happened* to be born there. But the dweller on Rhode Island, as he remembers Channing, may be pardoned

if, at the same time, he calls to mind those words of the Psalmist: "Of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: . . . The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there." What some might lightly call the *accident* of Channing's having been born on a certain beautiful spot, a thoughtful soul, weaned from the idolatry of chance, will recognize as the appointment of Divine Providence. And surely, if Channing himself repeatedly, both in private and in public, *thanked God that this beautiful island was the place of his birth;* if he himself said, "I must bless God for the place of my nativity," and, in so saying, confessed not merely his joy in nature, but the spiritual edification and education he had received there, as when he expressly and emphatically declares, "No spot on earth has helped to form me so much as that beach;" and when he again and again, in after years, thankfully acknowledges the influence of his seaside meditations and communings in breathing through his soul the

spirit of liberty and liberality, — is it not natural that we, too, should feel a certain enthusiasm in associating with his name the region he so fervently and fondly commemorates? as the writer of this book was moved to do on the Hundredth Anniversary of the Redwood Library in the following lines: —

Hail, island-home of Peace and Liberty!
Hail, breezy cliff, gray rock, majestic sea!
Here man should walk with heavenward-lifted eye,
Free as the winds and open as the sky!
O thou who here hast had thy childhood's home,
And ye who one brief hour of summer roam
These winding shores to breathe the bracing breeze,
And feel the freedom of the skies and seas,
Think what exalted sainted minds once found
The sod, the sand ye tread on, holy ground!
Think how an Allston's soul-enkindled eye
Drank in the glories of our sunset sky!
Think how a Berkeley's genius haunts the air,
And makes our crags and waters doubly fair!
Think how a Channing, musing by the sea,
Burned with the quenchless love of liberty!
What work God witnessed, and that lonely shore,
Wrought in him midst the elemental roar!
How did that spot his youthful heart inform,
Dear in the sunshine, dearer in the storm!
"The Father reigneth, let the earth rejoice
And tremble!" there he lifted up his voice
In praise amid the tempest — softened, there,
By Nature's beauty, rose the lowly prayer.

There, as, in reverential sympathy,
He watched the heavings of the giant sea,
Stirred by the Power that ruled that glorious din,
Woke the dread consciousness of power within.

Appearance of Newport Forty Years ago. — When the present writer first entered Newport (nearly forty-five years ago) there still lingered an air and aspect about the ancient and dreamy town which recalled far more readily than to the visitor in these days of improvement the look it wore to the eyes of the boy Channing at the end of the last century. The old stone mill may be said to have still stood almost on the outskirts of the town, with hardly any thing except a farm-house or two to break the sweep of open fields between that old landmark and the "Boat-house-gully" at the southern extremity of the island. The old wooden steps led down into "Conrad's Cave." The Redwood Library consisted as yet only of the small, graceful, and finely preserved building which now forms its front. A venerable high brick-wall enclosed the "Jews' Burying-ground." The now smooth

and comparatively stately Bull Street was then the lonely and grassy Bull's Lane, and was dominated by an old, dark, deserted distillery, one of the leading institutions of the olden time. At its upper end was an old, abandoned ropewalk, and another at the end of Catharine Street, where it sloped beach-ward; and still another ran along the side of the old burying-ground on (the appropriately named) Farewell Street. The old Governor Coddington House was still standing in Marlboro' Street. The old Liberty Tree (a sycamore) with the names of the burners of the "Gaspee" on a copper plate, half overgrown by its clasping bark, was still standing in front of the house of Ellery the Signer. At the head of Long Wharf was seen a row of high, dingy old stores, the rear of which hung directly over the water, with the outstanding beam by which cargoes were hoisted in the days when Newport did not yet fear the rivalry of New York. In the neighborhood of the "Cove" and along the "Point" were still visible the foundation-posts of old

distilleries, and in the main street the old pavement (laid at the expense of "one moiety" of the import duties on slaves) showed frequent blades of grass growing between the stones, and along the middle was a row of the broadest paving-stones, said to have been intended for the convenience of foot-passengers, and somewhat sunken, also, for the convenience of running waters. At the point where one turns from Long Wharf to Washington Street, stood the aged Washington Tavern, with the scarcely recognizable portrait of the Father of his Country swinging over its door, recalling the day when he himself came up the wharf side by side with Rochambeau; and across the inner harbor, where Goat Island now displays its lovely row of cottages and all the appurtenances of a naval station, a solitary old barrack kept alive the memory of the "Last War," and an aged veteran pensioner every spring paraded the streets of the town with a drum strapped to his shoulders, on which he beat the call to town-meeting for the annual election.

Add to all this the daily presence in the streets of sundry nonagenarians, white-skinned and dark-skinned, and fancy could, without a violent effort, rehabilitate the old town and look upon it with the youthful Channing's eyes. There was still, in its old Puritan severity of form, the Stiles Meeting-house of his childhood, and there was the old vane surmounting its spire, with the prophetic "W E" standing out against the sky, suggesting to the fancy of *one* beholder, at least, the missing letter "C" of the name of the boy who used to stand in one of the pews below, and once, when a man, stood in the pulpit, and whose name has since been set high in the sky of memory. And there stood, scarcely changed, the old Channing homestead, midway on the diagonal between the two parsonages, that of good old Parson Wheaton of Trinity Church, on the street above, and that of Dr. Hopkins on the street below.

What remains unchanged To-day.—And, after all, however great the changes that have

taken place in the old town itself since Channing's youthful feet roamed its streets and his eyes looked upon its then ancient and storied houses, of which only here and there one remains with nearly its old look, — Old Trinity, for instance, with its tall and graceful spire; the old State House at the head of the parade, and the Town Hall at the foot of it; the headquarters of Washington; the home of Malbone, the painter; the chamber in which Washington led the ball with "pretty Polly Lawton;" the old Sabbatarian meeting-house in Barney Street, where Callender delivered the first Century Sermon; the Jewish Synagogue; the Redwood Library; and the crowning relic, the old mill, — yet the same features of the face of nature which caught and charmed the eyes of the boy Channing meet ours to-day. There are sky and sea, beach and bay, bold cliff and spray-wreathed headland, outrunning ledge of rock and lovely sweep and swell of inland landscape; there are Purgatory and Paradise, and the Glen and the Green End road,

and Honeyman's Hill and Quaker's Hill (from which Channing often sat, in his old chaise, gazing up the bay), and near and far the many lovely islands; there is the "Whetstone," and Sachuest and Seconnet; there are Rose Island and Conanicut, — the everlasting murmur of the ocean and the everlasting rampart of the rocks.

The Channing Homestead. — The visitor to Newport, — a pilgrim, it may well be, from a far-off land, — among the relics of olden times which grace this ancient town, will seek, sooner than almost any other, the house in which Channing was born. If he comes up Mary Street (or Mary's *lane*, as it used to be called), when he reaches the old Trinity School-house at the corner of School Street, he will see facing him, on the opposite corner, a square wooden house of two stories, only with a third smaller one seemingly about to grow up out of the roof, over the street-door of which is the modest sign, "CHILDREN'S HOME." In this still well-preserved dwelling the child Channing first saw

ARTOTYPE J. A. WILLIAMS, NEWPORT R. I.

the light, first greeted and was greeted by that heavenly friend and minister, which, to his latest moment, was to be one of the peculiar joys of his life. On the next street below, in a diagonal direction, then separated only by a garden, was the gambrel-roofed parsonage of Dr. Hopkins; so that the young Channing could easily see (as he says he did early one winter-morning) the light beaming from the window of the little ten-by-twelve study-chamber, where the old man sat working at a sermon, or perhaps adding some new link to the chain of his iron logic; or where, as Professor Park says, in his memoir of Hopkins, "we can almost see him bending over his familiar desk, and listening to the roar of the ocean, and writing such words as these: 'The weak Christian, in the midst of strong temptations and potent enemies constantly seeking and exerting all their power and cunning to destroy him, is preserved and upheld through a course of trial by the mighty, omnipotent hand of the Redeemer; and the little spark of holiness implanted in the believer's heart is continued

alive and burning, while there is so much, both within and without, tending to extinguish it; which is really more of a constant miracle and manifestation of the power of Christ than it would be to preserve a little spark of fire for a course of years in the midst of the sea, while the mighty waves are fiercely dashing against it and upon it, attempting to overwhelm and extinguish it.'"

If the street on which the Channing family lived had been continued southward across Church Street (where it now ends), it would open directly upon what was then the Hopkins Meeting-house, visible across the fields from the parsonage, in which the young man, on the completion of his preparatory studies, preached his first sermon, and which, a generation later, when it was remodelled and newly clothed upon, as the temple of a more rational worship, he was the organ of dedicating to the Father in "a service of gratitude and joy."

It is not easy to avoid anticipating ourselves in this attractive, though oft-repeated story.

One can hardly resist the temptation of letting his thoughts run onward from the beginnings to the future of such a history, when that future has long been an illustrious past. But let us still, for a time, transport ourselves back to the morning of that life-day we have begun to describe.

The Period of Channing's Birth. — What has been said of the position of the house in which Channing was born in relation to the house and meeting-house of Dr. Hopkins, as it calls up the image of this veteran soldier of the cross, and the persistent and manifold warfare he had to wage with the world around him, leads us naturally, after having spoken of the *place*, to speak of the *period*, in which Channing, the candid eulogist of the old champion of Calvinism, was born, and the influences, social, political, and theological, amidst which he spent his early years. Thus we shall see what a large and well-furnished school-ground Providence had prepared for the education of this pupil to the peculiar

service his after-life was to perform for his brethren.

Newport after the Revolution. — It is common to call the actual fighting-days of the Revolution "the times that tried men's souls." But often the times that follow such terrible struggles try the *souls* of men in a still stricter and more searching sense of the language, by testing the strength of moral principle and the depth and reality and practical worth of religious conviction. The war had so terribly scathed and shattered old Newport in its outward condition, that when Dr. Hopkins came back to the place (in the very spring of Channing's birth) after its three years' occupation by the enemy, he found the wealthier half of the population gone, several hundred houses (his own among them) burned to the ground, and his meeting-house so much burned as to be unfit for occupation. But the moral and spiritual distraction and desolation that prevailed tried the old man more sorely than any of these external grievances. Scepti-

cism and sensuality, indifference and intemperance, held wide sway; the curse of slavery was on these lovely shores, for Newport was for some time yet "the slave-market of America;" and the Christianity which should have made a combined head against these evils was a kingdom divided against itself. There were Quakers, Baptists, Free-Will Baptists, Seventh-Day Baptists, Moravians, Methodists, Jews, Episcopalians, Universalists, and *Individualists* of the oddest and extremest kinds. But the most comprehensive statement of the situation would be to call the threefold enemy of true religion which then, as now, held the field, superstition, sensuality, and indifference. And if the good Dr. Hopkins could have supposed that his mode of presenting the gospel only aggravated the indifference or scepticism or rationalism which surrounded him like an atmosphere, he would doubtless have set it down to the credit of his doctrine and to the condemnation of the depraved nature which rose against it. It has been said of him, by one of his eulogists, that when he entered the pulpit

"sinners trembled and good men rejoiced." But there can be little doubt that among the (so-called) sinners were some who were ready to rejoice, could they have had set before them the simple, reasonable, practical *gospel*, — what could, without a gross misnomer, be called *good news* from Heaven.

In the midst of all these influences, however, a child was growing up, whom Divine Providence was training to proclaim and illustrate this true evangel in its purity and with power; to set before his fellow-men the gospel of Christ in such a fair and lovely light that calm reason need not be ashamed of it. And yet, if Rhode Island was the *place*, no less was Hopkins himself the *person*, to whose influence this child, when he grew to manhood, avowed himself more indebted than to any other, after that of his revered parents, and whom he indeed regarded as a spiritual father.

But whatever outward influences may have *helped* form, educate, and develop Channing's nature, still, as has often been said of him, and

by him, the most important part of his culture was internal, and came from the reaction of his native energies and propensions upon the appeals which the world and nature and life around him made to his soul.

Channing's Parentage and Ancestry. — And this, again, naturally leads us, from speaking of the place and period of Channing's birth, to say something of his parents and progenitors. Both on his father's and on his mother's side he came of a choice ancestry. From his maternal grandfather, William Ellery, the Signer, as well as from his paternal grandmother, Mary Chaloner, well remembered a generation ago in her first widowhood, "behind the counter of her little shop, dressed with great precision, busily knitting and receiving her customers or visitors with an air of formal courtesy that awed the young and commanded general respect," — from such grandparents as these — the plain, sensible patriot, patriarch, and philosopher; the "high-spirited and ardent, yet religious and

conscientious," active and methodical, matron — the child Channing might well have inherited some of the most marked qualities of his nature. But his parents themselves were both persons of strong sense and fine character. His father, William Channing, was an eminent Newport lawyer, a true gentleman, affable and affectionate, faithful in business, and friendly to all men; marked, as his distinguished son has written of him, by "the benignity of his countenance and voice," and "the delight of the circle in which he moved." His mother, Lucy Ellery, is described by her nephew as "small in person, but erect in bearing and elastic in movement; and strongly marked features, with a singularly bright and penetrating eye, gave her an air of self-reliance and command. Her manner was generally benignant, often tenderly affectionate, and marked by the dignified courtesy of the old school; but if pretension and fraud, in any of their manifold disguises, crossed her path, she became chillingly reserved and blunt to the verge of severity."

THE MOTHER OF CHANNING.

After a Painting by Washington Allston.

The likeness which, through the kindness of Dr. William F. Channing, her grandson, enriches this book, tells the whole story about her. And every one who looks at it is struck at once with the resemblance to her distinguished son. It is almost as if he were disguising himself in his mother's dress.

It has been said that great men generally inherit more from mother than father. Dr. Channing seems to have been no exception to this rule, though the best traits of both parents, as well as of their parents, appear to have been happily blended in his honest and earnest, careful and conscientious, tender and truthful, in a word, manly and godly, character. Both from his own mother and his father's mother, however, he seems to have derived his most individual traits.

Channing might almost have appropriated the words with which Marcus Aurelius opens his personal introduction to his "Moral Maxims:"—

"From my grandfather . . . I learned good morals, and the government of my temper.

"From the reputation and remembrance of my father, modesty and a manly character.

"From my mother, piety and beneficence, and abstinence, not only from evil deeds, but even from evil thoughts; and further, simplicity in my way of living, far removed from the habits of the rich."

Channing as a Child. — It is pleasant to imagine — it would be pleasanter if for the moment a miracle could be wrought, and the hand of Time put back, and with our present knowledge of the man he was to be, we could see with our eyes the boy Channing, as the memory of a venerable worshipper in the old meeting-house has pictured him to us, standing up by his mother on the pew-seat, in his blue jacket and white trousers, with his fine waving hair, looking round on the people. Could we realize the personal identity of the child with the man of sixty, looking round with his placid, paternal smile on the farmer-folk in the little meeting-house at Ports-

As a child he was marked by rare thoughtfulness and tenderness. So far was he from the cruelty to animals so often witnessed in children (by many ascribed to inborn depravity, but more probably owing to an insensibility arising from ignorance or thoughtlessness), that he felt a keen pang of grief and resentment at the suffering of the smallest creature; knowing that

> "The poor beetle that we tread upon,
> In corporal sufferance finds a pang as great
> As when a giant dies."

Upon this trait one of his French biographers remarks: "He who sheds these tears over the destruction of a bird's-nest will not cease to groan over the evils which burden humanity, and to feel them as so many wounds inflicted upon his heart." But there were, as we shall see (or, rather, as the world has seen), other and mightier elements that entered into the composition of the philanthropy of the mature man.

His Boyhood. — The boy William was distinguished among his fellows by a rare union of

energy and exuberance of spirits, daring and decision of purpose, with a tender, thoughtful conscientiousness and saintly purity. It is not easy for us — who knew Dr. Channing only in the last five or ten years of his life, as a pale, delicate shred of a body, "hardly enough to anchor his soul among us," reminding one of those aged olive-trees on the hills of Tivoli, clinging to the earth by so attenuated a sliver of trunk as to make them seem at a little distance suspended in the air — to think of him as a vigorous, agile, athletic youth; a racer, wrestler, climber, whom it was necessary sometimes to hold back by force from break-neck adventures; hilarious at times in his gayety, and boisterous in his laughter ("les éclats stridents de ce rire franc et sonore," a French biographer says); the champion of his companions in many a strait against injustice and oppression; acting the David against a Goliath of a bully; enacting in a figure that

> "Village Hampden, who, with dauntless breast,
> The little tyrant of his fields withstood."

But so it was, before the spirit had yet grown too strong for the flesh. Yet this same high-spirited boy was so genuinely religious that Washington Allston said of him, "though he was several months my junior, . . . I always looked up to him, even in boyhood, with respect." Indeed, he acquired among his playfellows the title of "the little minister." It was not merely from the fact of his doing so simply and solemnly what children so very often and early find a peculiar charm in doing (for childhood is just what it was in the days of Jesus), namely, playing the preacher. This, indeed, little William, it is said, would go through with singular unction; for want of bell, summoning his congregation to worship by the extemporized gong of a warming-pan, and delivering sermons (perhaps not written *by* him), one of which was long remembered for its text, the cry of the child brought in from the field with a sunstroke, — "My head! my head!" But not in such set and solemn way alone did the boy Channing justify the

ministerial title so early attached to him. He was a real minister in deed as well as word; "the little peacemaker" his companions also called him, and "little King Pepin" (as he was long after said to have been born for a mediator in the Church); and he was by his example a preacher of magnanimity, purity, and righteousness. Beauty of person he is said to have had, and he joined to it the beauty of holiness. "He is described," says W. H. Channing, "as having been small and delicate, yet muscular and active, with a very erect person, quick movement, a countenance that, while sedate, was cheerful, and a singularly sweet smile, which he never lost through life."

His three Schools. — Thus, already, in his tender years was this thoughtful and truthful boy learning in the school of Providence, — in its three apartments of home, the world, and the chamber of his own soul, — learning and even teaching that simple and genuine religion of which he was one day to be so eminent a public

teacher, and which was then so sadly maltreated and misrepresented, between a narrow pietism on the one hand and a settled unconcern, if not positive ridicule, on the other. Religion, as represented in its professors around him, was mostly either a creed or a ceremony or a sensation. His sensitive conscience, — the voice of God within him, — kept alive by home influence, and especially by the enforcement and example of that truth-telling and truth-exacting mother, made him keenly sensible of the truth that religion, if any thing, must be the law of the heart and the controlling principle of the whole life. From the natural guardians of his youth, and even from that (doctrinally) stern old Calvinist, who was the first pastor of the family he ever knew, he had learned the lesson, which his inborn disposition found congenial, of the worthlessness of mere profession and pretension; and his native chivalry combined with his conscientiousness to make him hate all shams, as much as did the good old Dr. Hopkins himself.

Early Spiritual Influences. — We must remember that when, after the Revolution, or, more exactly, at the close of the British occupation of Newport, which had broken up the churches, in the spring of 1780 they were opened again, as Dr. Stiles did not return to his people, they worshipped with Dr. Hopkins's till young Channing was six years old. It conjures up an odd picture to think of the future Dr. Channing reciting out of the Westminster Catechism to Dr. Hopkins! Grace was given the child to reject the indigestible shell of Calvinistic irrationalities and inconsistencies, and take only (what indeed, after all, the noble-souled old warrior valued more than all) the kernel of reverence for truth and honest conviction.

The incident that first, or most decidedly, startled and shocked his tender mind with a sense of the hollowness of the reigning religion, was his going with his father to hear a revivalist — a preacher of terror — whose doctrines seemed to darken the very atmosphere and spread over the earth the shadow of impending

judgment; but to the amazement of the simple-hearted boy, the father, instead of evincing any practical concern at such appalling news from the other world, beyond remarking to a neighbor on leaving church, "Sound doctrine, sir!" rode home whistling, and on entering the house, comfortably ensconced himself before the fire and began reading a newspaper! Well might the boy have had a feeling which, translated into maturer thought, would have said: "If so good a man as my father can be so beguiled as to let this hollow bluster pass for sound and wholesome religion, how deep-rooted and how baneful must be the perversion of religion which exerts such an influence!" "He felt," says his nephew, who gives the story in its full details on his eloquent pages, — "he felt that he had been trifled with, that the preacher had deceived him; and from that time he became inclined to distrust every thing oratorical, and to measure exactly the meaning of words; he had received a profound lesson on the worth of sincerity." And how well he had

learned and how deeply he prized this lesson, how vital an element of religion itself he felt the quality of simplicity and sincerity to be, shines out in all his later words and ways, not only in his repeated advice to young preachers, but in his own preaching, correspondence, and conversation, and, when (which was rarely) he entered into such, his controversies.

So passed Channing's boyhood. "The clew of our destiny," it has been beautifully said, "lies at the cradle-foot. Self-love would willingly seek it anywhere else; but there, — whether our manhood press the green savanna or tread the marble hall, — there will the backward glance of the inquiring spirit be ever sure to find it." Only in this case the *cradle-foot* must be interpreted in a larger than the literal sense. To the starry-roofed cradle of Mother Nature also we must turn our thoughts, when we seek the influences which conspired to mould Channing's impressible soul. In the sacred school of a strict and yet tender domestic discipline; in the wholesome school of "plain living and high

thinking;" in the large school of the street, the shop, the wharf, and the playground; in the school of deferential intercourse with Puritanical, but kindly and godly elders; finally, in the school of solitary communion with the Omnipresent under the sky and on the seashore; and above all and in all, in the school of his own self-communing thoughts, as a child of that Infinite Father, — so did the child and the boy receive his training for the great work which God had marked out for him; and though some undiscerning pedant of a schoolmaster might, at one time, set him down for a dunce in a certain branch of required study, he was destined to exemplify the distinction of the poet: —

> "*Knowledge* dwells
> In heads replete with thoughts of other men;
> *Wisdom*, in minds *attentive to their own*."

Channing himself has somewhere said that in his childish years he had nothing of the boy about him except the love of play. It has been asserted, but apparently without good authority, that his fondness for lonely rambles and

musings gained him with his fellows the title of "William the Silent." But even at this early period we can discern in him the predominance of that self-communion, self-study, and self-reverence, which, enlarged and elevated by the passionate love of nature and the vision of God in nature, formed so marked a trait of his character in maturer years, keeping his soul serene and steadfast amidst all earthly trials and perplexities, yet not in cold isolation, but in spiritual communion with the brethren through very communion with the Father. Thus was the child father of the man; the child's soul the nursery of that true independence which means dependence upon God, that individuality which respects itself, its own nature, as a trust from God, to be guarded and used for his glory and the good of his children.

The Future Man and Minister. — Rarely do we meet an instance in which the outer and inner worlds of childhood exhibit so broadly and palpably the working of the elements that are

to make up the history and character of the mature man. In the grave, sensitive, inquiring, reverent soul of the child, how clearly we see the future champion of that true religion which consists in the sincere search and reverence for truth and goodness as the very essence of God!

Singularly fitted were the circumstances of Channing's boyhood to educate in him the power to discern between the substance of religion and the shadow, — the shadow, as it frowned in the imposing creeds of a confused and crabbed theology; the substance, as it revealed itself in the homely and honest qualities of the lowly and dutiful, and even as it gleamed out here and there in heavenly contrast with the harsh features of a tyrannical orthodoxy. In the honest and blunt kindliness of old Hopkins, even in the very sternness of his well-meant though crudely expressed theology, and more in the noble unselfishness of his fight with slavery; in the very strictness of that Parson Thurston who, in his secular employment of

cooper, refused to make casks for the transportation of rum to buy slaves with, — even here the boy Channing had deepened in him the conviction that integrity was the essence of religion. By his own testimony, too, he learned the same lesson of the colored people, the domestics, and the neighbors of the family; of old Newport Gardner, Hopkins's faithful body-servant, and Duchess Quamino, of whom George Channing in a private letter says: "The most truthful worshipper in Dr. Patten's church went by the name of *Duchess;* a colored woman of royal appearance. At her death my brother, William E. Channing, wrote the following epitaph, visible to-day on her tombstone in the common burial-ground in Newport: —

In Memory of

DUCHESS QUAMINO,

A FREE BLACK OF DISTINGUISHED EXCELLENCE, INTELLIGENT, INDUSTRIOUS, AFFECTIONATE, HONEST, AND OF EXEMPLARY PIETY.

Blest be thy slumbers in this house of clay,
And bright thy rising to eternal day!

I used to visit her, when a boy, and read to her. Her title but feebly portrayed her *regal excellence* to us children."

The resting-place of this queenly personage cannot be said, however, to have any regal distinction, unless it be that of marked seclusion; for a reverent seeker, after long exploration one June morning, found the gravestone in the deep grass at the most remote corner of the old burial-ground, apart even from the graves of her own people.

Schooling and Training for College. — After receiving instruction from four successive schoolma'ams (whoever has seen or heard described one such, knows them all), William was sent to the famous Master Rogers, under whose eye and hand so many eminent men from different parts of our country have in turn passed. Among his schoolmates were Malbone and Washington Allston, the latter of whom characterizes him in a letter to William H. Channing, as "an open, brave, and generous boy."

"And I well remember," adds Allston (reminding us that in this quality of inspiring reverence, also, *the child* was *father of the man*), "though he was several months my junior (a matter of some importance among children), that I always looked up to him, even in boyhood, with respect."

At the age of twelve he was transferred to the care of his uncle, Henry Channing, then pastor in New London, to be fitted for college. From that pleasant home, where he soon endeared himself to his kinsfolk by his studious, affectionate, and respectful demeanor, he was suddenly recalled for a time, in a little more than a year, by the death of his father, who was taken away in the very bloom of life, and in the height of his activity and usefulness. The esteem in which he was held by the community and the sorrow for his death are expressed in the inscription (probably written by his son William) on the tablet over his grave, which faces the sky on the hill-top of the old Newport burial-ground:

In Memory of

WILLIAM CHANNING,

WHO DIED SEPT. 21, 1793.

AGED 42.

HE WAS EMINENT IN THE PROFESSION OF THE LAW;

BENEVOLENT IN HIS INTERCOURSE WITH MANKIND;

FAITHFUL IN FRIENDSHIP;

AN EXAMPLE OF THOSE VIRTUES WHICH ENDEAR DOMESTIC LIFE,

AND A ZEALOUS SUPPORTER OF THE PEACE AND ORDER OF SOCIETY,
AND THE INSTITUTIONS OF RELIGION.

TAKEN FROM HIS FAMILY AND NUMEROUS CONNECTIONS IN THE MIDST OF USEFULNESS,

HE HAS LEFT, TO SOOTHE THEIR SORROWS,
THE MEMORY OF HIS VIRTUES,
AND THE SUPPORTING HOPE OF HIS ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD THROUGH THE MERITS OF THE REDEEMER.

The death of such a father — it need hardly be said — threw a heavy shadow over the Channing household. A great light, as well as a strong staff, was gone. The anxious mother was left with a family of nine children. William, the oldest but one, felt, with his keenly sensitive nature, a peculiar load of responsibility suddenly laid upon his soul. He must now be both son

and husband to that stricken mother, and gird himself up to be a father to the family. He seemed to have leaped from boyhood to manhood. "Little minister" he was now indeed to be in an emphatic sense. From this moment his resolution was taken to gain as soon as possible some position where he could give his revered mother a home free from care. But for him the way to such an end lay through high culture, and he went back to the sunny home of his genial uncle to complete his college preparation, and in the autumn of 1794 he entered Harvard, being then in the middle of his fifteenth year.

Cambridge in 1794. — Harvard College had then only one hundred and seventy-three students. At a time when there were not so many in all the College as there are now in one class, there was probably more intercourse among the young men, irrespective of class lines, than now exists among members of the same class; though the modern extension of

the elective system in study, doubtless, does a great deal toward making college attachments independent of class relations. At all events, there is probably a far less strong, or at least peculiar, bond of union among the undergraduates generally than there was a hundred or fifty years ago, when the College was comparatively a cloistral seclusion, and not so much in the glare of the world.

Channing's Classmates. — Among Channing's classmates were Joseph Tuckerman, Joseph Story, and Sidney Willard, the son of the President, well remembered by all graduates of half a century ago as that amiable Latin Professor, so tenderly pictured in a college poem of William Simmons called "The Last Latin Recitation," one clause of which runs: —

> "In professorial eye methinks there glimmers
> A something moist."

This kindly old man, in his "Memories of Youth and Manhood," gives careful sketches

of the traits and fortunes of all his class. Of Channing he says: "In mathematics he probably had his superiors; but in rhetoric and written composition, in the languages, in ethical and intellectual science and metaphysics, he was unsurpassed by any, and in some of these eminent above all." Judge Story undoubtedly was in error in pronouncing that he had no relish for mathematics or metaphysics. It was not that he loved natural and intellectual philosophy less, but moral science, history, and general literature more. Both classmates, however, agree that "his command of pure English, and intelligible, accurate, and fluent expression of the author's thoughts in his translations of passages assigned to him in Latin and Greek, and his natural and graceful address in recitations of the English studies, translating in a manner the thoughts of the authors which he had made his own, into language of his own, were so remarkable that he was acknowledged without rivalship, and consequently without envy, to be chief."

His College Mates. — In glancing over the lists of the classes in the Triennial Catalogue, from 1795 to 1801, one can readily imagine that Channing may have found as much congenial companionship out of his class as in it. Among the names of his college mates we find Theodore Dehon, afterwards the eloquent Rector in Channing's native town for two years; James Jackson, the wise and beloved Professor, so well remembered by many living graduates for his lectures on the laws of health ("Breakfast heartily, dine sparingly, sup lightly, sleep soundly," he used to say, and "Never go to bed angry" was his version of "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath"); James Kendall, afterwards at Plymouth, the venerable "Kendall Green," as one playfully called him; John Pickering, the philologist; Leonard Woods (President Woods of Brunswick); John Collins Warren and Daniel Appleton White; Washington Allston, Joseph Stevens Buckminster, Timothy Flint, Charles Lowell, and Lemuel Shaw.

With such spirits as these we can safely

suppose young Channing seeking and finding, with some for a shorter and others for a longer portion of his college life, congenial companionship.

Among his classmates, as has been said, were Judge Story and Dr. Tuckerman. His college companions unite in their testimony to the charm which the mingled animation and dignity of his demeanor gave him for his fellow-students; to the equal heartiness with which he entered into the sports and studies of the place; his superiority in general literature, composition, and criticism; his love for history and philosophy, and the chaste eloquence of his style. Judge Story speaks enthusiastically of the "mellifluous" tones of his voice, using the same expression which Dr. Channing tells us was applied to his father's style and manner by Judge Dawes. Young Channing was a general favorite, and naturally a member of all the leading societies, not only the Institute of 1770, the Adelphi, and the Phi Beta, but the Hasty Pudding Club, and even into the Porcellian he was

elected, which was a rival and at times almost a foe of the Hasty Pudding, the one representing an aristocratic and the other a democratic element, but of the former he could not have continued long a member.

His Favorite Studies.—The study that became more and more a favorite passion with young Channing, as his college life went on, was that of moral philosophy. The reading of the Stoics no doubt revived and reinforced the impressions of the majesty and might of human virtue, of disinterested rectitude, and the sense of the dignity and divinity of all goodness, which as a boy he had received from the old Stoic of his native town. Hutcheson and Ferguson were the two English writers who did most to stir up in his soul that sense of the grandeur of man's nature and destiny which was to be the guiding and inspiring genius of his life. In Ferguson's "History of Civil Society," one chapter which perhaps especially attracted and impressed him was the one on "Moral Sentiment," in which

the author so vigorously combats the Utilitarian doctrine in morality, and in which occurs this striking illustration: "The foreigner, who believed that Othello, on the stage, was enraged for the loss of his handkerchief, was not more mistaken than the reasoner who imputes any of the more vehement passions of men to the impressions of mere profit or loss."

To Hutcheson's "System of Moral Philosophy" young Channing, we may well suppose, was drawn, not merely by the presentiment of finding his instinctive sentiments echoed and enforced, but also by the lovely character and spirit of the cheerful, serene, and benevolent author, so happily reflected in the sentiments and style of his treatise. That glowing image of the loveliness of virtue, the majesty of rectitude, and the beauty of holiness, which he caught from a glance of its pages, charmed his eye and kindled his soul. "The place and the hour" (in which he read the memorable passages in Hutcheson, e. g. the chapter headed "Some affections truly disinterested") "were," says

his nephew, "always sacred in his memory, and he frequently referred to them with grateful awe. It seemed to him that he then passed through a new spiritual birth, and entered upon the day of eternal peace and joy." "In his junior year," says the same biographer, "he had already become a moral and social reformer."

But he had also begun to be a Transcendentalist. He gained, as he himself says, from his philosophical reading of this period, "the doctrine of ideas, and during my life," he adds, "I have written the words Love, Right, &c. with a capital."

His Interest in Politics.—Not philosophy alone, but politics also (an important part of true philosophy), engaged Channing's ardent attention, and both studies derived an added attraction from the stir which the position of France was then creating throughout the world and especially in America. As an antidote to Paine's "Age of Reason," the College Faculty had put into the hands of every student Watson's "Apology for

the Bible;" and as a talisman against the democratic despotism of French Jacobinism, they needed nothing better than the cockade, which like a visible watchword cried, "Adams and Liberty." In his senior year Channing drew up an address of admiration and allegiance to President John Adams, which was signed by one hundred and seventy students (nearly the whole number then in college); and at his graduation, when the first part, an English oration, was assigned him, taking for his theme "The Present Age," he did not omit the part of Hamlet from the play of "Hamlet," though the Faculty had forbidden *all political discussion.* How he could have handled *the Age* without touching *politics* pretty strongly, is hard to see. After a somewhat obstinate contest between the students and the government, they finally yielded, at least so far, it would seem, as not to prohibit political *allusions;* for after an animated and explicit freeing of his mind on the whole subject, he exclaimed, with a significant glance toward the Faculty, "But that I am forbid, I could a tale unfold, would harrow up your souls!"

CHANNING, THE YOUNG STUDENT.

After a Sketch by Malbone.

It was probably about the time of his return home from Cambridge after his graduation, or possibly during some one of the vacations a little earlier, that the pencil sketch was taken by his friend Malbone, which, by the kindness of his son William, is here given. It shows the feminine tenderness, together with the manly frankness and generosity, and at the same time the moral dignity, sensibility, and courage, which have been described as among his marked characteristics.

What shall be his Profession. — And now came the choice of a profession. It is noteworthy that even up to his senior year the "little minister" had not thought specially or decidedly of divinity. Indeed, he had declared that he had "no inclination" for either of the three professions. And when he did begin to meditate choosing one among them, medicine seemed to be the one he most seriously contemplated. But as Jean Paul says of Herder and Schiller, "Both intended in their youth to be surgeons,

but Providence said, 'There are deeper wounds than bodily ones,' and both became writers," so we may say of Channing, who became eminently a writer, though pre-eminently more. And as to law, which his classmates supposed he would choose as the profession for which he was so peculiarly qualified, there was a higher than any earthly *cause*, which claimed his powers and his passion, — the great strife between man and his Maker.

Tutorship at Richmond. — Meanwhile, almost as soon as he left college, Channing, anxious to gain the means of pursuing his theological studies, eagerly accepted an invitation from a Mr. Randolph of Richmond to go home with him and be tutor to his son.

Southern Life. — Mr. Randolph was United States Marshal for Virginia, and his house was a centre of elegant hospitality, and Channing's letters glow with enthusiasm in describing his local and social position, — the glorious nature

around him, and the charming ease and freedom of the people's manners. "Could I only take from the Virginians," he writes, "their *sensuality* and their *slaves*, I should think them the greatest people in the world." Still, in the Randolph family and elsewhere, he heard slavery freely lamented and condemned.

Letters to Friends.—In his letters of this period we find frequent expressions of opinion on social and political topics, not surpassed in soundness by the convictions of his mature manhood. "The influence of slavery on the whites is almost as fatal as on the blacks themselves." "I wish to see *patriotism* exalted into a *moral principle*, not a branch of avarice. I wish to see government administered with a view of enlightening the mind and dignifying the heart." "A soldier *by profession* is too apt to forget that he is a *citizen*."

Self-Culture. — We find him at this time assiduously cultivating that fairness of mind, that passion for even-handed justice, that sense of

the importance of deliberation and discrimination, as elements of a determined and decided character, — that *moderation*, in short, in the best and true sense of the word, namely, self-regulated action, which was a more and more marked quality of his spirit to the last. He writes to a classmate, "You do not know what an enthusiast I have grown for *liberty*." He himself underscores the word; he had discovered that there were other *liberties* than freedom from the tyranny of French Jacobins or the Corsican usurper.

Results of his Richmond Life. — The twenty months Channing spent at Richmond — his *Thebaid* Lavollaie calls them — were probably more fruitful in consequences to his whole being, physical, mental, moral, and spiritual, than any other equal part of his life. In the first place, they undoubtedly sowed the seeds of that invalidism which had so much to do with the tone and direction of his mind and his whole inner and outer life in after years. For the sake of

improving himself as much as possible without neglecting his pupils, he stole from Nature hours needed for sleep, studying often till daybreak; in order to harden himself and keep the body under, "he accustomed himself to sleep on the bare floor, and would spring up at any hour of waking to walk about in the cold." On the same principle he practised a low diet, and, in order to save all he could for his mother, he stinted himself in clothing, so much so as not only to expose himself to the cold, but to deprive himself at times of cheerful society. No wonder that under this *heroic treatment*, this low living and hard study, having no relaxation save in lonely rambles and musings, he fell into a morbid, sentimental enthusiasm; that *musing*, as he himself tells us, *wore away his body and his mind;* that "the imagination threatened to inflame the passions," and that his "whole life" there was "a struggle with his feelings." "Fortunately," says Lavollaie, "Channing was mastered by two strong reins, — the taste for study, and the sense of duty, vivified by the love of God."

Struggle and Triumph. — Manly, indeed, the struggle was, and successful; although at first, from the stagnation of dreamy reverie, it transported him beyond what his friends thought the bounds of good judgment. It was natural enough that such a sudden waking as he himself describes should somewhat dazzle his eyes. The cool reception a poem of sentiment which he had wept over met from a lady to whom he showed it, and whom he knew to be a person of true benevolence and active sympathy, led him instantly to reflect "that there was no *moral merit* in possessing feeling," and he writes to his friend this confession: "It is true that I sit in my study and shed tears over human misery. I weep over a novel. I weep over a tale of human woe. But do I ever relieve the distressed? Have I lightened the load of affliction? My cheeks reddened at the question; a cloud of error burst from my mind. I found that virtue did not consist in feeling, but in *acting from a sense of duty.*"

Enthusiasm. — The visions of the perfectibility of man and of society which from this time animated his bosom, drew from his friends on all sides the most earnest cautions and remonstrances. And well might it seem to them — for example, his brother Francis, the lawyer, and his cool and considerate Grandfather Ellery — that he meditated a communistic revolution. Indeed, some of his language has a ring like that of Shelley himself, and especially when he winds up his delineation of the perfect society: "We should sleep securely; we should live long and happily; and perhaps, like old Enoch, when the time came, be translated to heaven."

Christian Aspiration. — But, after all, Channing, in principle and purpose, in idea and imagination, was right, and he knew he was right. Christ had come to organize the kingdom of Heaven on earth. Man was by nature capable of becoming a subject of that kingdom. "Is there a man so hard of heart," he asks, "that you cannot find in him some string to vibrate

to the touch of humanity? . . . Oh no! he bears a spark of divinity in his bosom, and it is Promethean fire that animates his clay."

New Birth. — Channing himself, indeed, ascribes to this period "the change of heart which is necessary to constitute a Christian." In one of his letters he says, "I have now solemnly given myself up to God." And the "act of self-consecration" has been sacredly preserved, but, in the words of his nephew, "is of too personal a character to publish." "This paper," he adds, "marks the transition point in the development of his character. The day-dreams of boyhood, the hopes of youth, the longings and aspirations of eighteen years, like morning clouds, condense and fall in a refreshing rain of penitence." But this figure would be hardly complete if we failed to add that these rains, after fulfilling their office of quickening all human and Christian graces of this earthly life, reascended to heaven as clouds again, to catch the light of the sun of perfection and kindle the soul of

the heaven-seeking pilgrim with new visions of the perfect day.

It will be remembered that there had been, before this, an hour in his college life also, from which young Channing dated "a new spiritual birth." And at a later period, in reply to an Orthodox friend's question, he said the whole of his life had been a *process* of conversion; to which the other rejoined that then he must have been *born regenerate*, for he was certainly now a child of God. To which Channing would surely have replied, had the conversation continued, that of course he, like every other man, was born a child of God. But the simple statement of the case doubtless is, that Channing was not only born again this once, but born *again and again*, as every thoughtful mind and tender heart will be in this world of ever new manifestations of divine truth and trials of human character.

His Theological Attitude. — In his theology Channing had not as yet extricated his mind

from the errors of the old system, the doctrine of "the vicarious character of Christ," and the necessity of "relying on his merits for pardon and acceptance with God." It is curious in this respect to compare Channing's development with the reverse process in Chalmers, who actually wrote in one of his early diaries: "May I dread to think that any thing but goodness can recommend me to the Almighty!"

Channing must have been yet in his emotional and sentimental period when he could read to a friend with tearful admiration the account Edwards gives of his conversion. How different is all that rapture of *sweet* contemplation in view of a divine glory in which holiness seems to be the only element, and humanity is left out of sight, from that adoring sense of the moral perfection of the righteous and loving Father, the very source and soul and sum of disinterestedness, which in Channing's mature thought was God's highest glory, and which, indeed, was felt to be such in that hour of his college experience, regarded by himself as the first

memorable awaking of his soul to true religion. At Richmond, indeed, we find him, during a violent transition from one morbid mood to another, confessing the "depravity and rottenness" of his heart; but this language seems to have been a remnant of the traditional mysticism which clung to him from his early training, and as it meets us on the first pages of the book of his life, it stands in dark relief, like those dismal stanzas of young Bryant's, which the zeal of elder orthodox friends prefixed to that serene and trustful poem, the "Thanatopsis," the last of which is, —

> "This bitter cup at first was given
> When angry justice frowned severe;
> And 't is the eternal doom of Heaven
> That man should view the grave with fear."

Happily Bryant outgrew such erroneous imaginings, and so did Channing, and this was no small part of his real conversion.

These remnants of the old superstition will, however, fall away in good time. Meanwhile it is clear that the impression he had received in

his very boyhood at Newport of the hollowness of the popular religion was confirmed in these years of his opening manhood by his Richmond experience. More and more his eyes were opened to the wrong done to humanity by the substitution of the husks of form and formula for the living bread from Heaven, the living Christ, the true gospel, the good news of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men. To a lively and thorough conviction of this real Christianity and its saving power he had now come through great tribulation.

His Return Home. — In the summer of 1800, after a miserable and sickening voyage, he returned to his home in Newport, changed from a buoyant and vigorous youth to "a thin and pallid invalid." Henceforth the only elasticity left him — but what a treasure! — was that of a spirit eagerly and ardently devoted to truth and freedom and humanity, of a hope no pains and infirmities of the flesh could extinguish, an aspiration which cheered advancing age with a growing presentiment of eternal youth.

Communion with Nature. — At home again, in the absence of his elder brother, who had removed to Cambridge, William became head of the household. During the year and a half he spent here, pursuing his theological studies, he battled bravely with the tendency to excessive seriousness and severity, partly inherited, and partly aggravated by his late trials and by the responsibility of his present position; and now again he found in his favorite communion with nature one of the greatest helps toward the recovery of a cheerful faith and a complete self-mastery.

Tribute to the Beach. — At this time it was that he found that natural oratory which he describes in his Dedication Sermon, the beach, of which he says: "There I lifted up my voice in praise amidst the tempest. There, softened by beauty, I poured out my thanksgiving and contrite confessions. There, in reverential sympathy with the mighty power around me, I became conscious of power within."

Of course the generally so fair and discriminating Professor Fisher, in his recent paper on Dr. Channing in the International Review, does not forget *this* piece of Channing's autobiography, though he mentions *only*, in referring to his communion with nature, an earlier confession, and says, "He would stand upon the beach at Newport, and in a high Byronic mood, long to rush to the embrace of the waters, *whose tumultuous heavings harmonized with the mood of his own spirit;*" and adds the remark, "It is hard to believe that these maudlin tempers could ever have belonged to a man of Channing's sterling sincerity."

The passage to which the reviewer refers is in a letter written just after Channing's graduation, in which he says: "Sometimes I compare my fortune to the billows before me. I extend my arms towards them, I run to meet them, and wish myself buried beneath their waters. Sometimes my whole soul ascends to the God of nature, and in such a temple I cannot but be devout."

It was only two or three years after this that

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he found in the same mighty ocean not an aggravation, but an alleviation of inward restlessness, even a sense of deep central peace. As he himself, in a letter of the year 1821, referring to this very time of his preparation for the ministry, writes: "Then I spent almost whole days on the seashore, where the majesty and power of Nature, absorbing, exalting, and transporting me beyond myself, *ministered most happily to the diseased soul.*"

Life in the Library. — A second agent in his education to the ministry was the Redwood Library, then in a somewhat deserted, as well as disorderly and disfigured condition, from having been used as a barrack by the British, and where his new pastor, Dr. Patten, Dr. Stiles's successor, was now librarian.

Channing and Hopkins. — A third, and, according to his own account, very important element in Channing's preparation for his great office, was his intercourse with Dr. Hopkins. It was during this preparatory period of study, but

whether in the Newport or the Cambridge residence is not certain, he once, as he tells us, preached for Dr. Hopkins, who rewarded his effort with an approving smile, remarking, in his usual quaint way, that the *hat was not yet finished* (meaning the science of religion), and expressing the hope that he would live to complete it. Channing might well have reflected that Hopkins's head required a peculiar shape of theological hat, and so indeed did every man's. Referring to this occasion, the present writer once read some lines at a gathering of the Channing Conference, which he ventures here to reprint: —

Would I could sing in fitting phrase
A song of the past and the future days,—
Could sing how this hill-top is to me
A hall of the fathers by the sea;
Could sing the renown of saint and sage,
Who have left the deathless heritage
Of a memory bright and pure and fair,
That lights the sky and embalms the air,
A spirit that breathes its blessing round,
And makes this hill a holy ground.

And chiefly, on my musing eyes,
Two forms in memory's light arise:

A stern old man and a manly youth,—
One in the burning love of truth,
One in the spirit that yearned to free
The soul from sin's captivity.
At the sacred desk I see them stand,
The youth and the veteran, hand in hand.
And now the elder has gone his way,
Dawns on his eyes the heavenly day;
The thoughtful youth, to manhood grown,
Has sent through the land and the world a tone
That thrills with a power of voice and pen
To be felt more and more in the souls of men.
And he too follows to the land
Where dwell the spirits' immortal band;
And the youth and the sire there once more
Join hands in a world where all doubt is o'er,
Where darkness and discord for ever cease,
And hearts are united in Christ and peace.

"For Christ and Peace" — oh, not alone
Are the words inscribed on yon corner-stone;
Immortal spirits gather here,
And whisper them in the musing ear;
The breezes catch them and never cease
The sweet refrain: For Christ and Peace.

Return to Cambridge. — In 1801 Channing accepted the place of Regent (or General Proctor, as the officer might have been entitled at a later day), an office which, requiring only a general superintendence of his hall and of the students

who roomed there, gave him time and means to continue advantageously his professional studies. He now began the habit, which he never relinquished, of reading with a pen in his hand. He remembered, probably, Bacon's dictum: "Reading makes a full man, *writing an exact man*, and speaking a ready man." He had already for some time been in the habit of committing to paper rules for his guidance in the formation of opinion, as well as of character. (Are they never to be given entire to the world?) "It is easy to read," he finds, "but hard to think." "I wish," he writes, "to have a few important truths impressed deeply on my mind, rather than to be lost in that chaos of universal knowledge which has hitherto distracted me. — Let me learn to be silent on subjects where I am ignorant. — Every sect has its *cant*, and there is danger of being blindly led by it."

Church Membership. — While at Cambridge Channing became a member of Dr. Holmes's church. His friends could not tell at that time

whether he would come out a Hopkinsian or a moderate Calvinist, and it is curious that the only question put to him when he presented his sermon as a candidate was, whether he believed God to be the author of sin. His answer is not transmitted to us. In addition to the favorite writers in philosophy already mentioned, he now read, with deep admiration of their piety, Law and Edwards. But from the contradictions of the Orthodox theology his good sense and his *natural religion*, his passion for accuracy of thought and for unity in his inner being, kept him clear.

His first Sermon (excepting perhaps those he gave at Newport for Dr. Hopkins and Dr. Patten) was preached at Medford, October 24, 1802, and the text was, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee." A noble and felicitous inauguration of a ministry which was to "give" to many souls the power Peter's word of faith was to give the lame body, — to "rise up and walk."

His brother George, in his "Early Recollections," writes: "Shortly after the late Dr. Channing received ecclesiastical authority to preach as a candidate, being on a visit to Newport, he was invited to deliver the [preparatory] lecture [in Dr. Patten's church]. It was soon noised about; and, being a great favorite in the town, an audience greeted him such as had never before assembled on a similar occasion; and they listened with evident interest to the sermon, *said to be his first*, from the text, Acts iii. 6," the same which is named as his *first* when preached at Medford.

It is with a peculiar reverence one takes into his hands the venerable and time-colored manuscript of Dr. Channing's first sermon, evidently retouched once and again by his careful hand and pruned by his severe taste, and showing already many of the traits of his mature thought and sentiment and style. According to the record on the first page, it was first preached in 1802 at Federal Street, in 1803 at Waltham, in May of that year at Dr. Howard's West Boston

Church, the same month at Lancaster, in April, 1804, again at Federal Street from Galatians vi. 10, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men" (omitting "especially them that are of the household of the faith," — his breadth of liberality and humanity already showing itself), — in May of that year at Medford, and in 1808 again at Federal Street.

This sermon, beginning in what would now be thought a commonplace way, as it goes on becomes singularly impressive by what might be called its *cumulative* force, the steady and onward swell of the tide of pure and natural and healthful thought and feeling that pulses through its pages. It illustrates a piece of advice which its author once gave a young sermon-writer, — to write with fervor and fluency and correct with coolness. These pages show extreme fastidiousness, and illustrate the labor by which Channing achieved his pure style; for instance, having first written, "The most hardened acknowledge the majesty of virtue, *and are awed in her presence*," he afterward strikes out the Italic clause.

Here are some short specimens which remind one of the author's matured style and sentiment: "Now all Christian morals may be reduced to one word, love. God is love. Christ is love. The gospel is an exhibition of love, and its end is to transform men into love. The blood of Christ was shed to make this ~~native~~ plant of heaven flourish on earth. . . . Ill humor is the source of many of the miseries of life. All the tyrants and heroic murderers who ever lived have never produced, in all their wars and ravages, as much wretchedness as the slow poison of fretfulness and the sudden bursts of anger in social intercourse. . . . Perhaps Christ, when on earth, won the hearts of publicans and sinners more by his gentle manners and offices of kindness, when he ate and drank with them, than by exhibiting his miracles. Men generally need sympathy more than silver and gold."

A classmate records in his journal hearing Channing give this sermon at Medford in October, 1802. Accordingly the impression it made led, doubtless, to its being repeated there a year or two after.

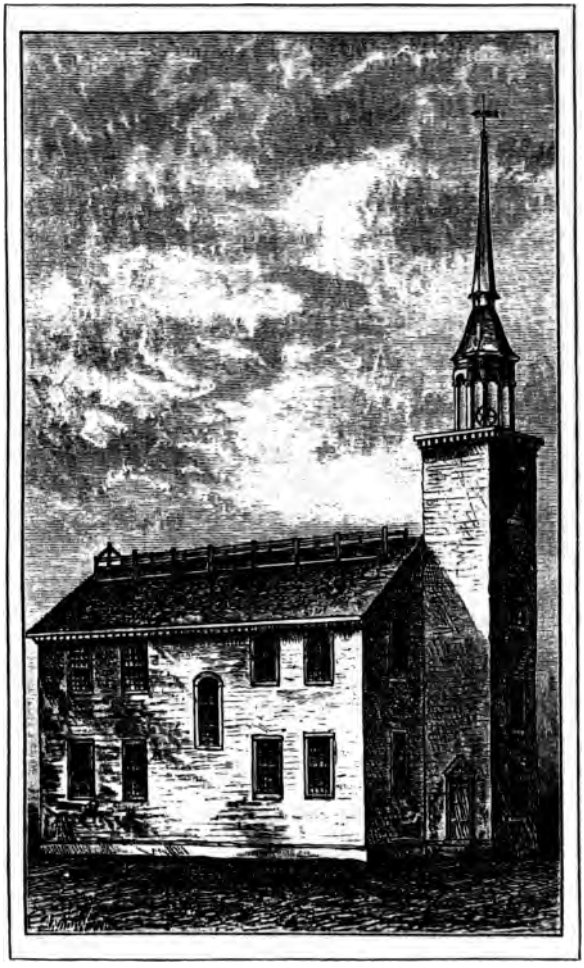
Called to Federal Street. — The impression he made both by his matter and his manner was such that two Boston societies, the one in Brattle Street and the one in Federal Street, simultaneously, in December, invited him to the pastorate. After considerable hesitation he decided for Federal Street, as being the "more humble sphere," and on the 12th of February, 1803, he formally signified to that church his acceptance of their call.

Old Mr. Ellery's Account of Him. — This seems a fitting place to insert a passage from a letter (never before printed) from William Ellery, the Signer, to his son then at school in Wickford. He says: "Your cousin [properly half-nephew?] William Channing is here. He has preached in our [Patten's] and Mr. Hopkins's Meeting to universal satisfaction. You cannot conceive what satisfaction it gives me to see my grandson walking in the truth with so much steadiness, and with so much eloquence and wisdom dispensing the light of the gospel. If he lives, he

will be a burning and a shining light. He is called to settle at Boston, and will accept the call."

For many years after his settlement Mr. Channing continued to correspond with his Grandfather Ellery, who, a French biographer of Channing says, "was less accessible to enthusiasm and illusion, less an innovator in religion, but animated in an equal degree with a large spirit of tolerance and love of liberty." Many of the old man's letters to his grandson on religious doctrines are preserved in his family. Some specimens are given in William H. Channing's Memoir.

The Federal Street Church. — The Federal Street congregation consisted originally of a company of Scotch Presbyterians from the North of Ireland, who worshipped in a barn in Long Lane (as the street was then called) from 1729 to 1744, when they built a wooden meeting-house, a copy of the engraving of which is here given; and, the convention having been held



The Old Federal Street Meeting-house in which Channing was ordained.

there in 1788, at which Massachusetts accepted the Constitution, gave rise to the name of Federal Street. In this meeting-house Channing was ordained and continued to preach till the new brick one took its place in 1809. Douglass, in his "Summary," gives a singular inscription taken from some part or record of the old church, which runs as follows (apparently it should be Latin verse): —

"Hujus fundamen saxum. Domus illa manebit.
Labilis, è contra, si sit arena, peribit.
Gloria Christi lex nostra suprema.
Desiderio, J. M., hujus Ecclesiæ
Christique, Pastor."

"The foundation of this is rock. This house will abide.
On the contrary, if loose sand, it will perish.
The glory of Christ our highest law.
By desire, J. M., Pastor of this Church and of Christ."

The Ordination took place on Wednesday, June 1, 1803. The services were: Prayer by Rev. Dr. Holmes; sermon by Rev. Dr. (then Prof.) Tappan of Cambridge; consecrating prayer by Rev. Dr. Osgood; charge by Rev. Henry Channing; right hand of fellowship by Dr. Tuckerman.

George Ticknor, then a boy, has recorded his reminiscences of the occasion, especially of the impressive presence of the "pale, spiritual-looking young man," and the "trembling voice and devout air" with which he recited the last stanza of the closing hymn: —

> "My tongue repeats her vows,
> Peace to this sacred house!
> For here my friends and brethren dwell."

This peculiar and indescribable charm in his reading of hymns, which so affected the boyish hearer of one of his first pulpit utterances, was a universally marked characteristic of him to the last. Referring to his preaching in Providence just a year before the Sunday of his death, Dr. Hall said: "His first accents went to our hearts, and his first hymn seemed to us a service."

First Months of his Ministry. — For a few months after his settlement Mr. Channing boarded with a parishioner. In these first months he had to go through a hard struggle with the depressing

influences of impaired health and the sense of professional responsibility. The question, Who is sufficient for these things? had with him so oppressive an emphasis that at times he was almost ready to resign his office. With the exception of his beloved brother Francis, who was a guardian angel to him at this time, he opened his mind to no one around him. His only other counsellors were himself and his Maker. Indeed, for some time, much of the sadness of his Richmond life seemed to be renewed. He shunned society, begrudging even to the family in which he lived the moments snatched from his studies and musings for his short and scanty meals. He dwelt mostly in the mount of meditation and communion with himself and with God. He felt that what he would teach and persuade others to be he must first become himself; and he sought and struggled and prayed for peace and purity and perfectness in the solitude of his own thoughts. Perhaps it would have been better, at least happier, for him at this time, if, instead of seek-

ing God so exclusively in solitude, he had dwelt more on that great thought of St. John, "God is love. . . . If we love one another, God dwelleth in us and his love is perfected in us." But it is with great diffidence we venture to make such a suggestion. Through such a season even of morbid self-inspection the Father of lights was leading this son of his toward the strength of self-mastery and the blessedness of self-sacrifice.

Appearance in Society. — When he did appear in society it was with an abstracted air. No one felt this more keenly than himself, and in his diary he writes: "Let it be my rule never to carry a subject with me into society."

Brings his Mother and Family to Boston. — He had for some time had a standing agreement with his brother Francis, that one or the other of them should remain single ten years at least, for the sake of helping support their mother; and now, having the advantage over his brother of a fixed income, he wrote to his mother that

the society had provided a parsonage, but he had no one to keep it for him, and added, with a pardonable half-truth, that he needed sorely her comfort and counsel and care. Thus he soon had the whole family under his own roof. At the same time he actually managed to pass himself off as a boarder with his mother! He took the smallest room in the house for his study, and slept in an attic-chamber, which he shared with one of his brothers, to whom he said one morning after a cold night: "If my bed were my country, I should be somewhat like Bonaparte [still dwelling on his favorite theme]. I have no control except over the part I occupy; the instant I move, frost takes possession." In one of his journals of this date is a striking passage, which those who knew him familiarly in his later years will feel had come to be fulfilled in his own person: "In the morning when I see any of my friends after the night's separation, let me receive them as new gifts from God, as raised from the dead." Many of us who visited him in his last years will recall

that beautiful and radiant greeting, as of one coming out of communion with Him, of whom the hymn so sweetly says: —

> "His morning smiles bless all the day."

And yet, at the period of which we are now speaking, according to his biographer's account, his habitual soberness and almost sombreness of manner presented a striking contrast to the prevailing tone of the family, — the mother's sharp-witted, plain-spoken honesty, and "the hilarity of the younger brothers and sisters."

Sedate amidst Household Hilarity. — Those of us who remember the Channing brothers in their ripe manhood, Dr. Walter and Professor Edward, and the venerable and vigorous nonagenarian of Milton, still living, can easily imagine what pronounced, not to say boisterous, specimens of outspoken merriment they may well have been in their boyhood's home at Newport. Still, with all his seriousness and sadness, he was sweet and kindly; but how, unless more than

mortal, could one, weighed down with chronic debility, keenly sensitive to the wants and woes of a world groaning for the peace-giving light of the gospel, yet feeling as keenly his physical inadequacy to the accomplishment of the task to which his own ideal of the ministry called him, — how could he, though ever so well convinced (in the words of the saintly Abbot) that "cheerfulness of manners is not merely an amiable grace, but a Christian duty," be otherwise than sober and sedate? And yet, after all, may we not well believe that *his* "strength," too, "was made perfect in weakness," and that what he may have lost in one kind of power may have been more than compensated by a deeper energy of the spirit?

His own Idea of Happiness. — And indeed, in one of his letters of this first decade of his ministry, he gives an admirably discriminating definition of happiness. He describes true happiness as "the *uniform serenity* of a well-governed mind, of disciplined affections, of a heart

steadily devoted to objects which reason and religion recommend. According to my tame imagination, Happiness is a very demure lady, almost as prim as the wives of the Pilgrims of New England. She smiles indeed, most benignantly, but very seldom laughs; she may sigh, but very seldom sobs; the tear may start in her eye, the tear of gratitude and of sympathy, but it seldom streams down the cheek. Her step is sometimes quickened, but she does not waste her spirits and strength in violent and unnatural efforts. She cultivates judgment more than fancy. She employs imagination, not to dress up airy fictions, not to throw a false, short-lived lustre over the surrounding scenery, but to array in splendor distant objects, which reason assures her are most glorious and excellent, but which, from their distance, are apt to fade away before the eye, and to lose their power over the heart."

Did not Channing himself sit for this picture? It certainly is, in many respects, a striking representation of his own habitual state, as well as

And it is interesting at this point to recall the fact that Bryant (between whom and Channing a striking parallel might be run) published not long after this, in the North American, an essay on the "Happy Temperament," "which" (says Curtis, in his fine oration on the poet) "is singularly interesting as the work of a poet whose strain is sometimes called remote from human sympathy, and a man who was so often thought to be cold and austere."

Channing as Preacher and Pastor. — Coming now to speak of him as the regular minister of a congregation, while thankful for the copious extracts from his sermons and papers which his biographer has given us, we cannot but regret that we could not have been favored with a complete and chronological series of his pulpit productions, especially as we are expressly assured that "his discourses were his best diary," and that "extracts from his sermons will afford us the surest guidance" to his "spiritual development," inasmuch as "their topics and the treat-

ment of them were transcribed from the records in his heart; and his reproofs and appeals to his people were but the outward symbol of his own private struggles."

He has described Himself. — If, however, the specimens his nephew has given us are an average of his pulpit work, then, though indeed it may not be easy for us to realize to ourselves, except from our own remembrance of the man and his manner, the profound impression such (in the best sense) *homely* preaching is said to have created, yet, with this aid of memory, we can well understand how Henry Ware should have called his brother Channing's sermon at the ordination of John Codman a description of his own ministry. For instance, he says there: "In preaching, his heart should disclose itself in his sentiments, manner, and style. Whilst unfolding the divine perfections, he should let men see that they are perfections he himself loves and adores. In enjoining a Christian temper, he should urge it as one who has felt

its beauty and power. When describing the promises of the gospel, he should speak with the animation of a holy hope. . . . Let me here mention that it is highly important that his *manner* be earnest." And here he elaborates a distinction, to which he again and again recurred in charges to young ministers: "By this I do not mean a noisy, tumultuous manner. I do not mean that a minister must have lungs of iron and a voice of thunder. Noise and earnestness are very different things. . . . In the still, small voice we may discern the language of the heart. . . . This expression of the heart is the perfection of ministerial eloquence."

And this was Channing's. And yet, strangely enough, he enters in his diary such self-accusations as these: "I am sensible of a want of tenderness in my preaching. I want to preach striking, rather than melting sermons." The truthfulness he had inherited from his mother shows itself in all his discourse. He charges his brother minister not to try to show feeling when he has it not. Better seem cold where

one is so. He wishes he had the modesty of statement for which Butler (and we may add Paley) is so remarkable. "Some people," he says, "rather than lose a good metaphor, or a fine sentence, are often tempted to assert what is not altogether accurate; and they have their reward. They astonish, but do not convince. They strike, but do not keep their hold of the mind. May you and I love *Truth* better than *Rhetoric!*"

Characteristics of his Early Sermons. — In looking over the hundred pages of pulpit discourse opened before us in William Channing's first volume, we are struck with the absence, not of the sensational element merely, of any thing like impassioned and startling appeals, but of all ornament, of any thing indicating literary fancy. There is not a quotation from any book, except the Bible. There is nowhere any heat, but only a quiet glow of faith and hope and love, — love of God, of truth, and of human souls. No lightning-flashes, but over all the

broad and blessed sunlight of a holy and humane spirit.

Through the kindness of his son, a few extracts are here given from his first (and unprinted) Thanksgiving sermon, from 1 Tim. vi. 17: "Infinite majesty arrayed in the mild lustre of benevolence. . . . The *ruins of human nature* exhibit nothing more mournful than a soul rich in experience of divine mercy, yet unimpressed with the kindness of that Being from whom all its blessings are derived. . . . True gratitude is not a selfish affection. It does not confine itself to the blessings which an individual receives. It rejoices in all the good which it sees God communicate. . . . There is nothing in us to recommend us to God. Sinners as we are, we are vile in his sight. Our sins cry to God for unmingled vengeance. We see blessings descending from infinite heights on beings who have fallen an infinite depth. . . . God increases in good. His system is a swelling one. All evil will terminate in good, and all good will lead to greater. . . . God,

as it were, deprives his own benevolence of the gratification of relieving them [human sufferings], that he may grant you an opportunity of partaking his love and sharing his blessings."

Thus far only negatively Anti-Orthodox. — In these sermons of the first decade, before the breaking out of the Unitarian controversy, Channing appears chiefly in the three characters of the moral and spiritual preacher, the faithful pastor, and the patriotic citizen. In theology, so far as denominational distinctions are concerned, his views seem to have been (to use his biographer's image) somewhat in a "morning fog." Probably he would have been counted among the *moderate Orthodox*, that is, in regard to his ideas of the nature and work of Christ and the process of salvation. Thus he says: "A change of heart is the object of the gospel. . . . Every man must be new-born, have a new heart." He will have "meetings to pray for the Spirit. . . . Let my visits be ministerial and

serious." "When we look at the incarnate Saviour," he says in a sermon, "we see man as he was before the fall."

Arian and yet Humanitarian. — And yet, though an Arian, in his idea of Jesus as having come into this world from a higher state of being, he was, in the best sense of the word, a Humanitarian, and grew more and more such with advancing years. Thus he says, in the very sermon just quoted: "The incarnation declares man to be an important being in the creation of God. It declares that the human soul is a germ in which are wrapt up noble powers, — an inextinguishable flame, which will grow bright and clear with truth and goodness." And it must be remembered that even in the days of his study for the ministry, he had stumbled at the doctrine of the Trinity, and of prayer to Jesus; and in these first ten years of his preaching his theological tendencies showed themselves plainly enough, were it only in his negative attitude with regard to the peculiarities of

Calvinism, and his positive emphasizing of the spirit and precepts of Christ as the saving power of the gospel.

His very first sermon struck the key-note of his system of religion. It was a memorable thought for that day: "We glorify God when by imitation we display his character."

His Anti-Calvinism grows more pronounced. — But here and there come out positive expressions of repugnance to the Calvinistic system. He insists upon the figurative nature of the language about Christ's having "*purchased* the Church with his own blood," and makes the striking remark: "Christians themselves are said to be bought, and not their salvation." He pronounces Christ's Church to be "those who *truly imbibe his spirit*, no matter by what name they are called." In one of his letters to his Grandfather Ellery, with whom he kept up for several years a close correspondence on theology, he says: "You complain that our standard

is not *particular* enough. But this is the distinguishing feature of our system of liberality." In this letter (1807) he contents himself with saying: "I am by no means ready to say that no man can be a Christian who does not believe in the total depravity of human nature. A man may doubt on that subject, yet hate sin." He insists on the distinction between the saving truth and men's ideas of that truth, — between *propositions* (as we might say) and *dispositions*, as essential qualifications for heaven. But in 1812 he expresses his horror of Calvinism (that "vulgaire et effrayante" doctrine, as a French biographer quotes him) in the strongest terms, saying, if it is indeed true, "then existence is a curse and the Creator is — O my merciful Father, I cannot speak of Thee in the language which this system would suggest!"

Dr. Furness, in his short but comprehensive "Life of Channing," published in William Ware's collection, speaking of the early years of his ministry, says: "There is much that awakens in the reader a melancholy that amounts to pain.

His ill-health, his profound sensibility, the dimness of his views, if we may so speak, in regard to the Orthodox doctrines of the day, give us the impression of a very sad and struggling soul, a saint walking in darkness. Although tender and gentle, yet Dr. Channing was then far from being a cheerful man. He never seems to have unbent. We have no record of seasons of exhilaration and triumph. He was apparently one of those on whom falls the second benediction of Jesus. He was of *those that mourn.* Under that beatitude is he to be ranked."

Both Mystic and Rationalist. — There is much truth in this, though somewhat strongly put. Undoubtedly Channing was at this time a good deal of a Mystic, as well as Rationalist: we cannot say, more of the former than of the latter; though if a Mystic means one who recognizes and reverences a background of mystery to every truth, we may say that he grew more rather than less a Mystic, as he emerged more and more into the light of the glorious gospel.

At the same time the importance of the practical as well as rational elements of religion never took a lower place, but rather a higher, in his growing thought. He certainly would not have scouted, as many too hastily have, the dictum of James Foster, that "where *the* mystery begins, religion ends," if religion means there, not reverence, but *service*. For one great idea with him at this time was, that men should leave mysteries with God, and unite their strength upon the plain ground of the pure and philanthropic precepts. Until the famous attack upon the Liberal preachers in the "Panoplist" of June, 1815, opened the Unitarian controversy, Channing seems to have held the ground that the articles in which Christians agree are more important than those in which they differ, — a position which perhaps it was safe enough to assume so long as, by keeping unreasonable and pernicious dogmas in the background, men virtually confessed that the wholesome ones were the essentials, and left it to be hoped that the old errors would drop and die. And it is

admirable to see, in the sermons of the ante-controversial period, how in elaborating his favorite thought that "Christianity is a temper and a spirit rather than a doctrine, it is the life of God in the soul of man," he nevertheless runs his plough under the very roots of the doctrines which dishonor God. And in the same direction his noble papers in the "Christian Disciple," beginning in 1813, also point, in which he summons men to use reason as a religious faculty, and to make religion a reasonable service; and exposes the sophistry of those who would persuade men to take their faith from either the *learned* or the *pious*.

The "Christian Disciple." — The object of the periodical just referred to, the "Christian Disciple," is happily described in the words of Channing's classmate, Sidney Willard: "The object of its projectors was to publish an *Evangelical* work, in the true sense of the term, and not as claimed by a sect, and no otherwise controversial than it might be made so by the assaults of

those who claimed for *themselves the possession of the whole gospel truth.*"

Opening of the Unitarian Controversy. — Meanwhile the war had begun, as, indeed, we can hardly see how it could longer have been staved off, when there were men like Channing about, uttering such insinuations of the immorality of the Calvinistic dogmas of total depravity and purchased pardon, and contending that "the great controversies in the Church may be resolved into one question, — IS GOD, INDEED, PERFECTLY GOOD? To my mind, most of the prevalent theories of religion rest on the supposition that he is *not* good, that his government is dreadfully severe, and that it is the greatest of evils to receive existence from his hand."

He places more Emphasis, as yet, on "Liberal" than on "Unitarian." — And yet so averse was he to a breach in the Congregational body that his defence of the Liberal party against the charges of the "Panoplist" takes almost an

apologetic tone. The dread of *controversial bullying* (as he calls it) at first almost repels him to the opposite extreme. In his several letters to Dr. Worcester he labors to show that "the differences between Trinitarians and Unitarians are very often verbal," the former, for instance, maintaining that Jesus was *personally* united with God, and the latter that he was *intimately* united; though he also insists that, "would Trinitarians tell us what they mean, their system would generally be found little else than a mystical form of the Unitarian doctrine."

But every effort which such a mind as Channing's made to dispel the storm only hastened it; and indeed it was needed to clear the misty atmosphere.

He still prefers the high and broad spiritual and practical Ground. — Meanwhile, how little to his taste theological controversy was, is shown by the fact mentioned by his nephew, that among all the sermons of this period not a single controversial one is to be found. The chief effect

on him of the intellectual stir of the times seems to have been to give a fresh vivacity and vigor to the tone and style in which he put forth his great spiritual and practical ideas of God and man and Christ; whose "gospel" (as he expresses it) "may be said to be a *revelation of man to himself.*" The only disputed doctrine on which he dwells much is one which he regarded as rich in spiritual and practical lessons, the pre-existence of Jesus. Several eloquent pages are devoted to showing how this would account for the awe he inspired, and how it exalts our sense of his disinterestedness and self-sacrifice.

But it is when he contemplates the coming of this holy Mediator in the spread of his pure and peaceful principles through the hearts and homes, the souls and societies of men, that he breaks forth into the highest strains of his eloquence, transporting our thoughts onward to that last swan-song of his life.

"At the thought of this reign of benevolence," he exclaims in 1816, "the whole earth

seems to me to burst forth into rejoicing. I see the arts and civilization spreading gladness over deserted regions and clothing the wilderness with beauty. Nations united in a league of philanthropy advance with constantly accelerating steps in knowledge and power. I see stupendous plans accomplished, oceans united, distant regions connected, and every climate contributing its productions and treasures to the improvement and happiness of the race. In private life I see every labor lightened by mutual confidence and aid. Indigence is unknown. Sickness and pain are mitigated, and almost disarmed by the disinterestedness of those who suffer and by the sympathy which suffering awakens. Every blessing is heightened and diffused by participation. Every family, united, peaceful, and knowing no contention but for pre-eminence in doing good, is a consecrated and happy retreat, the image of heaven. The necessary ills of life shrink into nothing. The human countenance puts on a new and brighter expression. Human nature, with its

selfishness, loses its base deformity, and is clothed with the glory of God, whose designs it embraces, with whose spirit it is imbued."

Well does Dr. Furness say: "It was not by doctrinal preaching, but by the precepts of the New Testament, that a great change in opinion was wrought in New England. It was practical preaching that worked a doctrinal change."

Channing's Idea of God's Word. — We find Channing himself complaining, toward the close of this second period of his ministry, that Unitarianism "has suffered from a too exclusive application of its advocates to Biblical criticism and theological controversy; from a too partial culture of the mind." From this one-sidedness, however, he himself, by his early education, as well as natural openness of mind and sensitiveness of spirit to the stir of that memorable age of the world, was happily saved. The progress of philosophy had not, indeed, as yet widened the great issue in the religious controversy, from the question what God's *Word*

says, to the question of these latter days, *where* that Word is to be sought. Practically, however, Channing himself was already, for one, answering, Not in Scripture alone, but in Reason and Nature. It is remarkable, indeed, that one who from his earliest years was so imbued with the love of nature in his discourses has so little to *say*, philosophically or practically, of *that* expression of the mind of God. But the truth is, he is so full of nature's influence that, like Jesus himself, he speaks *out of it* rather than *about it*.

Channing's Patriotic Efforts. — In 1812, Channing, after some hesitation, declined the Professorship of Sacred Literature at Cambridge, afterward accepted by Mr. Norton; his thoughts were beginning to be turned into various directions of public activity by the critical condition of the country. Already in 1810 we find him, in a Fast Day sermon, straining every nerve to awaken the people to the dangers to which they, no less than Europe, are exposed by the am-

bition of Bonaparte; in 1812 he *blushes*, he *mourns*, to see his "country taking part with the oppressor against that nation which has alone arrested his proud career of victory, . . . linking itself with the acknowledged enemy of mankind;" in 1814, on the expectation of a landing of the British on our shores, he preaches, in kindling tones, the duty of manly self-defence; and the same year, a little later, at the "solemn festival" of thanksgiving for the overthrow of Bonaparte, he rises to such a pitch of enthusiasm as he exclaims, "The oppressor is fallen and the world is free," that the audience in the Stone Chapel break out into cheers. The whole paragraph, which the reader, doubtless, will be glad to see, is as follows: "At the moment of its greatest glory, when its foundations seemed to the gloomy eye of fear firm as the hills, and its proud towers had pierced the skies, the lightnings of heaven smote it and it fell! Most holy, most merciful God! thine was the work, thine be the glory! Who will not rejoice? Who will not catch and repeat the

acclamation which flies through so many regions, — the oppressor is fallen, and the world is free!"

On the same occasion Dr. James Freeman of King's Chapel "read selections which he had made from the Scriptures, so appropriate," says Samuel J. May, "that it seemed as if he had culled the history of the modern usurper from the pages of the Bible. When he came to the end, I well remember, he raised himself to his utmost height, stretched out his arms, as if in a majestic transport, his face perfectly radiant with emotion, his eyes flashing unwonted fire, and shouted at the top of his voice, — 'Babylon the great has fallen! Babylon the great has fallen! Hallelujah! Praise ye the Lord!' and then burst into tears. The whole audience was carried away with the emotion. Many who were sitting sprang to their feet, and the loudest applause was hardly suppressed."

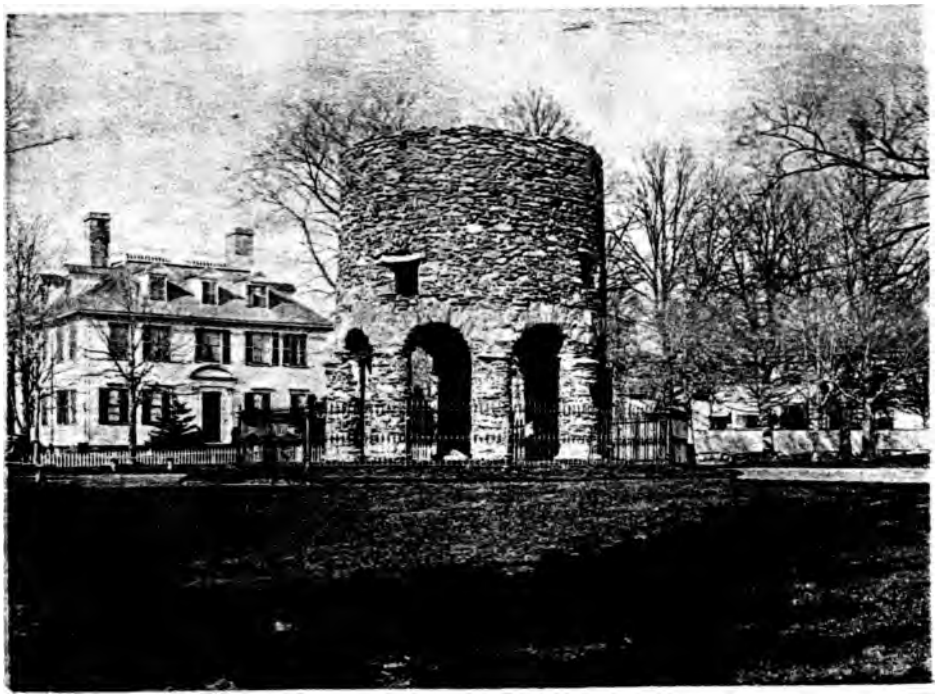
In 1816 Dr. Channing preached the great sermon on War which led to the formation of the Massachusetts Peace Society.

More Bold in his Unitarian Affirmations. — Meanwhile, in 1813, he had been chosen into the Corporation of Harvard College, and was also an active member of the Bible Society; at the same time, loyal to his Unitarian principles, he delivered, in 1819, the mighty blows at Trinitarianism and Calvinism in his Baltimore sermon at the ordination of Jared Sparks, — a sermon which set many an Orthodox minister to thinking, and turned, we are told, several Methodist preachers to a Liberal faith; and the next year he followed up this onslaught with the famous paper on the "Moral Argument against Calvinism."

Philanthropic Labors. — All this time he had been more and more assiduous in his pastoral duties and private studies, opening his mind to the new lights of philosophy and inspirations of poetry that came from England and from Germany, educating himself to be more and more completely a teacher of his people and a spiritual benefactor to his fellow-men. In the education of the young and of poor children, in the

training of the citizen, we find him foremost in word and work. In an address of 1817, before a society for educating indigent boys, are many forcible and striking thoughts. He says: "The higher classes of society have a tendency to intellectual imbecility, and need to be replenished from the lower." Again, "that men will labor less because improved in understanding" seems to him "an erroneous notion. The great motives to steady labor lie in a perception of the future consequences of actions, and require a mind of some comprehension, foresight, and calculation to feel their force; and hence we may expect the steadiest labor from men whose faculties have been enlarged by education. That this is precisely the fact history and observation prove. Slaves and savages, who receive no education, are proverbially indolent. The hardest laborers in this country are the husbandmen of New England,—a class of men who have been formed under institutions peculiarly fitted to expand and invigorate the understanding."

In 1818 the famous Berry Street Vestry was



ARTOTYPE J. A. WILLIAMS, NEWPORT R. I.

built through his influence, for the Sunday school and social meetings of the church; and there, in May, 1820, he opened the well-known Berry Street Conference of Liberal Ministers. He was all the while equally attentive to the interests of the University, meditating and advising upon the best methods of study and of discipline. In 1821 he gave his great Dudleian Lecture there on the "Evidences of Revealed Religion," — the one which contains that striking and significant thought, that "all minds are of one family," — only another form of his great central doctrine of the worth of human nature.

Events in his Domestic Life. — This variety of occupation in secular and social (all of them to him, indeed, religious) matters could not fail to give to his pulpit utterances even an increasingly vigorous and manly character, while there must have been infused into them a new tenderness and reach of sympathy by the profound domestic experiences of joy and sorrow through which, during these years, he had been called to

pass. In 1810 his beloved brother Francis had died on a voyage undertaken for his health; in 1815 came the sad news of the death of his sister Ann, the wife of Washington Allston. Meanwhile, in 1814, on the 21st of July, he had been married, by Rev. Dr. Gardner, at the house of his mother-in-law, to his cousin, Ruth Gibbs, — an event which brought him a threefold blessing, peculiarly and providentially seasonable just then to his condition and calling: in the first place, he had found a thoughtful, amiable, placid helpmeet and companion; secondly, one who brought with her a property which set his mind free from anxiety about earthly prospects; and, lastly, this union led to his subsequent enjoyment of that summer retreat on Rhode Island which ministered so graciously to his soul and body, and from which, in the last ten or twelve years of his life, went forth a good proportion of his finest utterances on the great themes of the day. In 1816 was born his first child, a daughter, who lived but a day; in 1818 a second daughter came to take the place of the

lost one; and a few years after, two sons were born, one of whom died in infancy; the other, born in 1820, still lives. Their mother, it may as appropriately be mentioned here as elsewhere, lived to a serene and hale old age, retaining to the last a certain youthfulness in her venerable beauty, and in her charming sympathy with the growing life around her, and was spared to grace the circle of her kindred to the age of ninety.

Devotion to his Mother. — And here, too, may be said what remains to be told in this brief story, of Dr. Channing's mother. Soon after his settlement, he had, as has already been mentioned, coaxed her by an innocent half-guile, to come and keep his house in Boston, and gradually gathered the whole family under his roof. But after his marriage he procured for her a separate house; still, however, seeing her daily and almost as much as if they had continued within the same walls, and cherishing for her, through the remaining years of her life, the love and veneration of a dutiful and affectionate child.

She was ever in his earliest morning and his latest evening thoughts. What changes had she lived to see in the history of her household! Truly her children had risen up to call her blessed! She lived into the culminating years of her most distinguished son's fame as a preacher and an author, and on the 25th of May, 1834, at the age of eighty-two, she passed on, "full of years and honors, after a favored life, a venerable age, and a larger experience of happiness than falls to the lot of most human beings." "A mother's love," Dr. Channing had long before written, "is, in some views, more touching than any other. It has more of the immutableness of the Divine goodness."

His feelings and reflections amidst all these domestic experiences colored all his sermons and services, and gave them the quality of personal communications to his people. The meaning of marriage, birth, death, was from time to time recognized in the most tender and home-coming manner in his pulpit utter-

Journey for Health through New England. — But the manifold intellectual efforts and emotional excitements of this period had proved too great a strain upon his frail frame. In the summer of 1821, in hopes of recruiting his health, he made a journey through the north of New England, during which his love of nature found some of its finest expressions. Looking at the mountains, he says: "My mind seems to enlarge, to swell with these majestic forms, which claim kindred with the skies." The "loveliness and tenderness of beauty . . . exhausted us," he says, but the "grandeur" of nature "gave an exulting, triumphant feeling." And at home in Oakland, reviewing the journey, he writes: "This magnificent creation has been to me, even from my boyhood, a principal source of happiness; but I never entered into its spirit, felt its power and glories, as on this journey." Thence he turns to a description of his new home ("which I am weak enough to think the best home on earth"): "I was powerfully reminded of the early years of my life, when these shores were

my favorite and almost constant haunts. Then, before I knew you, I had not 'found rest to my soul,' for I was very much a stranger to true religion. My spirit, consumed with passionate fires, thirsted for some unknown good, and my body pined away to a shadow under the workings of a troubled mind. [Then follows the sentence already quoted on page 83, substantially anticipating that eloquent tribute to the Newport Beach in his Dedication Sermon.] . . . Thanks to God, those days of tumult are past, and an existence, the beginning of which is still a mystery to me, and which was wrapt in many clouds, has opened into blessings which I would not have dared to anticipate."

Voyage to Europe. — But the spring of 1822 found him so much exhausted that he was persuaded to try a voyage to Europe, Orville Dewey being engaged to supply his place. His reflections at sea are beautifully expressive of his spirit. The sea-bird cradled in the tempest

should be an enviable sight, he thinks, to souls "torn with passion or remorse." He sees no "rage" in the ocean, but only "spirit, eagerness." He cannot call it "*old* ocean." "Its crest of foam is not hoariness, but the breaking forth of life. Ocean is perpetual youth." The waves "do not seem to rise by a foreign impulse, but spontaneously, exultingly." Again, "they seemed, as they rolled in regular intervals towards us, like the gentle heaving of a sleeping infant's breath. I did not feel as if the ocean was exhausted by its late efforts, but as if, having accomplished its manifestations of awe-inspiring might, it was now executing a more benignant ministry, speaking of the mercy and the blissful rest of God"

Naturally one of his first visits in Europe was to Windermere and to Wordsworth; with both his spirit must have felt a rare harmony. Both the philosophic poet and the poetic philosopher, Wordsworth and Coleridge, he saw and admired, and was admired by them in turn.

Sad News received abroad. — But this absence from home was, after all, an exile, and was made emphatically such by two heavy afflictions, the tidings of which reached him at Rome, — the death of an infant son, and that of Barbara, the wife of his brother Walter. In his outpourings of sorrow for the loss of his child occurs this beautiful passage: "When I think of my child, of its beauty and sweetness, of the tenderness he awakened, of the spirit which God had breathed into him, and which had begun to develop itself, I cannot doubt that he was the care of God in death as in life. He was made for God; had he lived, my chief duty would have been to direct him to that Infinite good, — and has he not now gone to Him from whom he came?"

Several of his letters from abroad constitute a fine treatise on the early training of children. He dwells particularly on his favorite trait of *truth*. "It is better," he says (repeating the very counsel he gives the preacher), "that they should *seem* cold than *be* insincere. . . . Children

must *never be deceived.* . . . The best way of teaching children love is by example."

Return to his Pulpit. — Dr. Channing stood again in his pulpit in August, 1823. His spirit had been greatly refreshed by his tour, but so little was he physically recruited that after once publicly greeting his people, and giving an account of himself, he retired to his island home, and from there wrote to his society, asking an assistant in the place of Mr. Dewey, who had been called to New Bedford. The society immediately voted to give him a colleague, and Ezra Stiles Gannett was ordained to that office in the spring of 1824.

Fortunate in his Colleague. — Great was the relief Dr. Channing gained from this arrangement, by the help of which he was enabled, notwithstanding his permanent infirmity, to produce sermons and essays which make the next ten years the culminating period of his literary life.

A Sunday Morning in Federal Street. — Here is a glimpse of the man on a Sunday, engaged in what Dewey has called "the greatest action of his life." We borrow a passage or two from William Channing's glowing, but not in the least exaggerated description: "There is no excitement in the audience, but deep, calm expectation. With a somewhat rapid and an elastic step, a person small in stature, thin and pale, and carefully enveloped, ascends the pulpit-stair. It is he. For a moment he deliberately and benignantly surveys the large congregation, as if drinking in the influence of so many human beings; and then, laying aside his outer garments and putting on the black silk gown, he selects the hymn and passage from Scripture, and, taking his seat, awaits in quiet contemplation the time for commencing the service. What impresses us now in his appearance is its exceeding delicacy, refinement, and spiritualized beauty. In the hollow eye, the sunken cheeks, and the deep lines around the mouth, the chronic debility of many years has left an in-

effaceable impress. But on the polished brow, with its rounded temples, shadowed by one falling lock, and on the beaming countenance, there hovers a serenity which seems to brighten the whole head with a halo." One more eloquent passage we quote upon the preacher's manner: "There are no expletives, no fulminations, no fanatical outpourings. But the small figure dilates, — the luminous gray eye now flashes with indignation, now softens in pity, — and the outstretched arm and clenched hand are lifted in sign of protest and warning, as the wrongs which man inflicts on man are presented with brief, but glowing outlines. . . . Sin and degradation are made to appear unspeakably mournful when measured by the majestic innate powers, the celestial destiny appointed to the most debased; every spirit becomes venerable to us, as heir of God and co-heir of Christ, as the once lost but now found, the prodigal yet dearly loved child of the Heavenly Father."

Channing an Author. — It was now that Dr. Channing established his literary fame, and became, as he says, by accident an author. The papers which first made him widely known to the general public as a writer, independently of his theological position, date from this period. Not that he ever forgot or lost sight of his Unitarian mission and allegiance in the most secular of his works. Upon his *Unitarian* convictions (in the best and full sense of the word) they were all grounded, out of it they all grew.

The Liberal Preachers and Organs in Boston and elsewhere. — Unitarianism had now gained a local habitation and a name. Boston and Cambridge were Unitarian. What had been whispered in the ear was now proclaimed from the house-tops, — from the bells in the steeples. The new doctrine (new because a revival of the old) had its organs, its mouthpieces, its living expounders and examples. "The times," says Channing himself in reverting to that period, "demanded

that a voice of strength and courage should be lifted up, and I rejoice that I was found among those by whom it was uttered, and sent far and wide." There were Ware and Norton at Cambridge, Buckminster, Channing, and Thacher in Boston, Dewey at New Bedford, Bancroft at Worcester, Sparks in Baltimore, and Furness in Philadelphia, — a noble company!

In the charge to his colleague in 1809, Dr. Freeman said, in King's Chapel: "The young ministers with whom you will have the longest intercourse are not only adorned with brilliant talents, but blessed with candid hearts. I advise you to cultivate their friendship. Conversation with them will be the source of mutual improvement. Their learning, taste, and eloquence will excite your emulation; and as I am persuaded that both you and they have honorable minds, you will never be jealous of each other's success. From the combined efforts of you and them, I expect to see the new era of preaching which has already commenced become still more splendid, — an era in which the ministers of this

town will rival the solidity of the English and the eloquence of the French divines."

The "Examiner" Articles. — Meanwhile the Unitarian banner had been hung out: the "Christian Register" had been established in 1821; the "Christian Disciple" was succeeded by the "Christian Examiner" in 1825, and in the last-named periodical appeared in quick succession the celebrated articles (which it sounds strange to hear William Channing call "hasty effusions") on Milton (1826); on Bonaparte (1827–28); and on Fénelon (1829), — in all of which his reverence for humanity, his conviction of the sacredness of human life and the divinity of the human soul, and of the rights and duties of human reason, are affirmed and reaffirmed. In the paper on Fénelon, in which, as his nephew says, with "countless little strokes and touches . . . he sketched his own likeness with a fidelity which no second hand will ever rival, and the almost angelic idea of piety there given was an unconscious portrait of the beauty of

his own holiness," at the same time, with faithful discrimination, he exposes the saintly man's error and delusion respecting the self-sacrifice required of Christians, — eloquently maintaining that so far from sacrificing reason to faith, we are divinely required to reverence reason as an inner revelation of God, as the image of God in the soul. And in a note in his handwriting found between the leaves of a volume of Fénelon, Dr. Channing, after quoting the words *we are to give up all to God*, says: "But God is the Ideal, the Perfect, and the spring of Perfection; his will is Himself, and this will is our Perfection;" and further on, in rebuke of the narrow notions respecting God's glory, he says: "His will is entirely disinterested, without the least self-reference. In sacrificing our wills to his, we choose the perfection of all souls, as He chooses it, for their own sakes."

Channing's Great Sermons. — The ten years following and including the ordination of his colleague were also the birthtime of those

great occasional sermons in which Dr. Channing's master-ideas found their finest and most forcible expression, — the idea of the modern ministry, set forth at the ordination of Mr. Gannett in 1824, as demanding an enlightened, earnest, inquiring, and reforming spirit; the idea of the peculiar and superior tendency of the Unitarian faith to produce piety in its true subjects, preached at the New York dedication in 1826 (the occasion made so memorable, and to the Orthodox so offensive by the startling and terrific image of the "Central Gallows"); the idea of *power* in the preacher, discoursed upon at the dedication of Divinity Hall the same year; the idea of likeness to God, presented at Mr. Farley's ordination, closing with the noble paragraph: "It may be said that I dream, that I people the world with the creatures of my lonely imagination;" that of the purpose of Christ's religion to produce a healthful and manly virtue, urged at Mr. Motte's ordination, — both in 1828; and the idea of human freedom, so eloquently expounded in the Election Sermon of 1830.

Journey for Health to the West Indies, 1830. — This was the year in which Garrison was preparing to strike his first blow at American slavery, and this was the year in which Channing started for the West Indies, to recruit the strength which he was, on his return, to devote so largely to the very cause of human rights and human freedom which the "Liberator," in a less quiet, but not more sincere and steadfast way, was spending his marvellous energies, and to see with his own eyes more fully what he had early felt at Richmond, the magnitude of the evil which was eating at the heart of the republic.

Gradual Withdrawal from Parish to Public Labors. — Channing had come to feel that he could no longer fairly combine an honest and hearty discharge of pulpit and parish duties with the fulfilment of that larger mission of humanity to which his observation and studies and sympathies all plainly pointed out that Divine Providence was urging him; and so,

gradually, year by year, he sought to loosen, by insisting on successive reductions of his salary, the metallic bonds (so to speak) which held him to his pulpit. But it was not till after more than ten years of friendly strife between pastor and people (not indeed till his earthly service was wellnigh ended) that he could succeed in securing any thing like the release he contemplated. For the last ten years of his life he used to go down early in the summer to his island retreat, returning late in autumn to give his annual message from the Spirit to his Boston people, and occasionally a set sermon, but for the most part saving his strength to devote it to the great public causes of enlightenment and emancipation which now claimed his best powers.

Influence on the Philanthropic Specialists of the Day. — Henceforth all the leaders in the various departments of the service of humanity found in him a wise and wary, but firm and fervent friend and counsellor. Joseph Tuckerman,

Horace Mann, Charles Follen, Harriet Martineau, Samuel J. May, Bronson Alcott, — all looked to Channing as one of whose final and full sympathy they were certain, because they felt sure that he was governed by a spirit of even-handed justice, and that that justice was but another name for humanity. They felt that the more slowly and carefully he might come to the support of their objects, that support would be all the more precious because all the more profound. His was that "charity" which "rejoiceth in the truth."

Mrs. Chapman's Calumny refuted. — It would be hard to find, in the literature of misrepresentation, a more glaring instance of what may be called flouting facts in the face than that exhibited by Mrs. Chapman, in her biography of Harriet Martineau, when she comes to speak of Dr. Channing's part in the antislavery conflict of New England. It was not strange that during the heat of the contest men in the vanguard and forlorn hope of the abolition party,

almost compelled to see only one object, and to feel that all who were not with them were against them, should, in their impatience with the giant iniquity of the land, fail to do justice to good men who, feeling the evil as much as they did, could not act with them in their precise way; and therefore we are not astonished that even Channing should, at that day, have been regarded by many as a hindrance and a hurt to the cause of emancipation: but that now, at a distance of nearly half a century from the struggle, when we can look back upon it with comparative calmness, especially when we have Channing's entire earthly record closed to contemplate, any one should be able to sit down and coolly pen such a tissue of falsifications as is contained in the following paragraph would seem almost inconceivable: —

"Dr. Channing, between whom and Harriet Martineau a true friendship subsisted to the day of his death, was a good man, but not in any sense a great one. With benevolent intentions, he could not greatly help the nineteenth cen-

tury, for he knew very little about it, or, indeed, of any other. He had neither insight, courage, nor firmness. In his own church had sprung up a vigorous opposition to slavery, which he innocently, in so far as ignorantly, used the little strength he had to stay. He was touched by Brougham's eloquent denial of the right of property in man, and he adopted the idea as a theme: but he dreaded any one who claimed, on behalf of the slaves, that their masters should instantly renounce that right of ownership; he was terror-stricken at the idea of calling on the whole American people to take counsel on so difficult and delicate a matter in antislavery associations; and, above all, he deprecated the admission of the colored race to our ranks. He had been selected by a set of money-making men as their representative for piety, as Edward Everett was their representative gentleman and scholar, Judge Story their representative gentleman, jurist, and companion in social life, and Daniel Webster their representative statesman and advocate, looking after their business. inter-

ests in Congress." — *Memorials of Harriet Martineau*, Vol. II. p. 272.

Could any thing well be further from the truth than this picture of one whose whole life, and pre-eminently his bearing through those last ten years of his life which covered the beginnings of the antislavery movement in New England, shows him to have been so true a follower of that very Jesus, whom the Abolitionists themselves appealed to, who was at once the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and the Lamb of God, and who enjoined upon his disciples to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves? What a far-fetched idea to seek for the origin of Channing's determination to fight against slavery in the example of Brougham and of England! What an inversion of the truth to represent him as holding back his own parishioners from excessive zeal in the cause of the slave! What a gratuitous insinuation, of such a soul's having been held back from the path of truth and duty by the fear of man, the love of popularity, or the overawing power of this world in any form!

And what a dulness or wilfulness it implies, not to recognize the rare *greatness* of the man, who, with such a native craving for the calm atmosphere of meditation, deliberately at the command of conviction sacrificed his ease and comfort to the turmoil of social and political conflict,— the greatness of the man, who, with all his deep and long and patient thought, suffered himself to learn and to be led along, with the meekness of a little child, by Divine Providence, even though its instruments were men whose ways and manners often shocked his taste and his sense of Christian justice.

But the best comment on Mrs. Chapman's aspersions will be a simple sketch of Dr. Channing's relation to the antislavery movement in Boston.

Channing and Antislavery. — It was during his sojourn in the West Indies that Dr. Channing drew up the first sketch of his book on Slavery, which finally came out in 1835. The interval was spent in watching the public

mind, in testing his own qualifications and vocation with regard to the subject, in writing and in communicating his thoughts upon it, and, as his biographer intimates, in waiting for the tempest to subside, before he should call men to listen to the "still, small voice." But when, soon after his brother May's memorable reproof of his silence, which he confessed had lasted too long, Dr. Channing had published his book on Slavery, and had gone so far as to invite Mr. May to his pulpit, he became more and more, in the eyes of his people, identified with the Abolitionists; though he still stood in a somewhat judicial attitude between them and their persecutors, insomuch that even after his bold stand at the indignation meeting upon the Lovejoy murder, he wrote a long letter to the "Liberator," cautioning the friends of the slave against the war-spirit, while acknowledging the justice of their cause. Still, in regard to the right of petition, the right of free speech, the wickedness of the mob-system, Channing was firm and unflinching, and throughout the

remainder of his life to its very close, the wrong done by slavery to humanity, and the faith that it must sooner or later yield to the triumph of the gospel, were the thoughts ever nearest to his heart.

What a contrast and corrective to the tirade we quoted from Mrs. Chapman is the generous confession of Mrs. Child: "At first I thought him timid and even slightly time-serving; but I soon discovered that I formed this estimate from ignorance of his character. I learned that it was justice to *all*, not popularity for *himself*, which made him so cautious. He constantly grew upon my respect, until I came to regard him as the wisest, as well as the gentlest apostle of humanity."

And here again comes into view the parallel in history and character already intimated between Channing and Bryant, who became slowly and cautiously at last so stanch and strenuous a champion of antislavery, and of whom Curtis says: "Bryant seemed to the ardent leaders of that great agitation, as the multitude of editors

and politicians seemed to them, indifferent and hesitating, too cold and reluctant for their own generous warmth and zeal."

In 1837 came his letter to Henry Clay against the annexation of Texas; in 1839, "Remarks on the Slavery Question," in answer to a speech of Mr. Clay's; in 1840, a pamphlet on "Emancipation in the West Indies;" in 1842, one on the "Duty of the Free States," suggested by the case of the Creole; and finally, in August of the same year, his dying bequest (as we may call it), in the address at Lenox, in which, one is almost tempted to say, the style is even more spirited and sententious, the eloquence more an "action" (according to the demand of Demosthenes), than in any performance of his most vigorous days. In calling it the Swan-song of his earthly life, one must not forget that it shows the eye and the wing of the eagle.

Read a few pages, beginning, "Men of Berkshire, whose nerves and souls the mountain air has braced, . . . I feel as if this feeble voice which now addresses you must find an echo

amidst these forest-crowned heights,"—in which he goes on to resent the idea of the danger of emancipation, exclaiming: "Chains are not the necessary bonds of society; oppression is not the rock on which states rest. . . . Oh! do not imagine that God has laid on any one the necessity of doing wrong. . . . Better that the globe should be tenanted by brutes, than by brutalized men,"— read these passages, and then the indignant rebuke of the crocodilian tenderness which has no tears for any victims but the imaginary ones of Emancipation, and you will feel that the orator has regained all the fire of his best youthful days.

Philanthropic Addresses continued. — Had these labors in behalf of freedom and justice been his only ones in this closing decade, it might well have seemed to us that they would have been more than his delicate frame could have borne without being shattered; all the while, however, not from the author's desk only, but from the lecture-desk and the sacred desk, he was, from

time to time, pouring forth elaborate and eloquent arguments and appeals on peace, temperance, self-culture, the elevation of the laboring classes, the ministry to the poor, the claims of the prisoner; and from this period, also, date several of his most thrilling pulpit discourses,— the Dedication Sermon at Newport in 1836; the one on the Sunday school, first given there, in 1837; the funeral discourses on Dr. Follen, in 1840, and on Dr. Tuckerman in 1841; and the same year the great and catholic discourse at Philadelphia on the Church.

But this general catalogue of Dr. Channing's productions is given chiefly for the purpose of reminding our readers what a marvellous amount of mental work, for one in his state of health, he accomplished. It shows the power of a pure and lofty purpose to economize and extend even one's physical abilities; it illustrates how a good man's strength may be "made perfect in weakness,"— how, where "the spirit is willing" and wise, the very weakness of the flesh may be made mighty.

Letters of the Closing Decade. — And yet, after all this, much of the best part of the work of Channing's mind and heart and soul in these years of his comparative release from professional service remains to be spoken of. The amount of truth, wisdom, pure and ennobling influence that went forth from his beautiful and tranquil island home, who can .estimate, who can intimate in any worthy manner? In no part of his life, one may venture to say, do we catch more inspiring glimpses — breathings — of his humane, heavenly catholicity than from the letters, conversations, and memories of this afternoon, this eventide of his days.

The beautiful sentiment he had uttered in 1830, "always young for Liberty," was the virtual expression of all his following years. In these last ten years of his life, and especially in the last five, that spirit of liberty and humanity which had in politics broken out in the form of abolitionism, almost at the same time in religion appeared even in the pulpit, where it received the names, by turn, of Transcenden-

talism, Rationalism, and Radicalism. Upon the sharp struggle this caused in societies and souls Dr. Channing looked forth from the "loop-holes of retreat" no uninterested spectator; in the spirit and in living words he leaped forth into the battle; and in no part of his life or writings do we find more condensed expressions of thought at once free and reverent, of a wisdom fitted at once "to quicken and restrain," than in the easy and yet thoughtful letters of this period.

Yearnings for higher, broader, and freer Conceptions of Christianity. — He had long felt a growing conviction of the need of new and nobler conceptions and administrations of Christianity. In 1827 we find him writing to his friend Tuckerman from his island retreat: "The effect of the quiet thought to which I give myself here is to make me more sensible to the thick darkness which overspreads the Christian world. . . . The false theology which has prevailed for ages is burying us still in night. But the corruptions

which we are trying to expose in the popular system are perhaps but superficial compared with those which remain unrecognized, and which we all inherit. The true reformation, I apprehend, is yet to come." And in the same year, in one of his annual addresses to his people, he had declared that his "love of freedom" had "grown with the growth of his mind," and that to stimulate free thinking, in the true sense of the phrase, had been the highest aim of his ministry. And in the same discourse he reiterates his sense of the value of what we may call *open-air Religion*, his obligation to nature as "a powerful teacher of liberal feelings" and one that does much to counteract the illiberal preaching which passes for Christianity. In 1828 he asks Mr. Dewey, "Cannot this subject [religion] be taken out of the hands of ministers?" In 1831 he writes to Degerando: "What is here called Unitarianism, a very inadequate name, is characterized by nothing more than by the spirit of freedom and individuality." To Joanna Baillie, the same year, he writes: "For

years I have felt a decreased interest in settling the precise rank of Jesus Christ. The power of his character seems to me to lie in his spotless purity, his *moral perfection*, and not in the time during which he has existed. I have attached less importance to this point from having learned that *all minds are of one family*, that the human and the angelic nature are essentially one." The same year he tells Henry Ware, Jr., that he differs from him in his "desire to imbue the theological students with a professional spirit." In 1832, writing to Sismondi, he doubts whether the "purified Christianity" he anticipates "is to rise in the form of a sect or party," and thinks "the age of symbols" is "passing away." The same year, to Emily Taylor, he explains his calling "the soul divine," as meaning that the yearning toward God is "the very essence of human nature." In 1833 he writes to William Burns on his favorite subject, and says, "I have seldom, perhaps never, met a human being who seemed to me conscious of what was in him." In 1835

he expresses to Sismondi his idea of "a purer church and a spiritual philosophy. . . . By a purer church I mean a community, no matter how small, in which there would be a direct manifestation of the peculiar power of Christianity to purify and ennoble human nature." And now we come upon the series of letters to Blanco White, in which the union of tenderness and truthfulness is very beautiful. In 1838 he writes to him that he feels as if his whole life had been but a preparation for a work he has yet to do, and which he may need another life to accomplish.

Dr. Gannett's Criticisms. — It may be mentioned here in this chronological, if not logical connection, that, under date of Dec. 22, 1839, his more conservative colleague, referring in his diary to Dr. Channing's morning sermon says, "I did not like the sermon." One is startled at first, for the critic's sake, to hear of any one's *disliking* a sermon of Channing's. But presently he is *for a moment* startled even

for the great preacher's sake, when he learns what the doctrine was which created such uneasiness, and which made Gannett fear Dr. Channing's leaning toward the new Transcendentalism, namely, that the law of rectitude is an absolute one, to which God himself yields obedience ("voluntarily subjects himself"), and not simply an expression of God's own will.

And again, Jan. 5, 1840, Dr. Gannett demurs at another of Dr. Channing's teachings, that the best of Christianity is a republication of the religion of reason and nature. "Even the character of Christ and the character of God, Dr. Channing thought, were excellent and glorious rather for what they had in common with other good beings, than for any attribute which they alone possessed."

Letters to Blanco White. — In 1839 Channing writes: "I would that I could look to Unitarianism with more hope. . . . You seem to me to make religion too exclusively a product of the reason. . . . I consider religion as founded

in the joint operation of all our powers, as revealed by the reason, the imagination, and the moral sentiments." He also differs from him in making a higher account of historical Christianity. He admits, "I need miracles less now than formerly. But," he adds, "could I have got where I am, had not miracles entered into the past history of the world?" He also says: "I have no sympathy with those who disparage the *natural*." In a letter to Miss Peabody, of July 18, 1840, he is grieved to find her "talking so lightly of *daring to be decidedly wrong*," and speaks of "that *unguardedness* which, though so beautiful to some, to me is a moral defect." Under the same date he refers to a "touching sermon" which he had heard the day before from Frederick Eustis, in the Newport church, on the loneliness of Jesus Christ, and adds: "I claim little resemblance to my divine Friend and Saviour, but I seem doomed to drink of this cup with him to the last." Coming from one so little given to morbid expressions, what a significant glimpse this gives us of Dr. Chan-

ning's feeling of the peculiarity of his position between the so-called Conservatives and the so-called Radicals! In 1841 he writes to Professor George Bush: "I have little or no interest in Unitarians *as a sect.* I have hardly any thing to do with them. I can endure no sectarian bonds." And to another correspondent: "I am little of a Unitarian, have little sympathy with the system of Priestley and Belsham, and stand aloof from all but those who strive and pray for clearer light, who look for a purer and more effectual manifestation of Christian truth."

Persistent Misrepresentations of Dr. Channing's Relation to Unitarianism.— One would think this was plain enough, and yet a recent lecturer (Julius Ward) has contrived so to misrepresent the following letter to Mr. Martineau, dated Sept. 10, 1841, as to make it imply a confession on Dr. Channing's part that *his* system is vitally defective! Here is what he really says: "*Old* Unitarianism must undergo important

modifications or developments. . . . *It* cannot quicken and regenerate the world. . . . It pledged itself to progress, as its life and end; but it has gradually grown stationary, and now we have a *Unitarian Orthodoxy.*" Was this *Channing's* system? Was this "Channing Unitarianism"? A month or two after he writes: "That any existing sect should put down all others would be but a secondary good."

Besides, a few years before he had written to Sismondi, in the same strain about *Protestantism generally*, declaring his conviction that "a purer, higher form of Christianity [than that] is needed, such as will approve itself to men of profound thinking and feeling, as the real spring and most efficacious instrument of moral elevation, moral power, and disinterested love." "No religion," he says in another letter, "can now prevail, which is not plainly seen to minister to our noblest sentiments and powers; and unless Christianity fulfils this condition, I cannot wish it success." And again, several years later: "One higher, clearer view of relig-

ion rising on a single mind encourages me more than the organization of millions to repeat what has been repeated for ages with little effect. The individual here is mightier than the world, and I have the satisfaction of seeing aspirations after this purer truth."

Apropos of the once common insinuation that Dr. Channing at some time renounced Unitarianism, admirably does Dr. Bellows say in his recent commemorative sermon at the Church of the Messiah, just before remarking that "it was Channing's *piety* that made him a Unitarian, and his Unitarianism sustained and expressed his piety," — "No wonder that a saint so pure and lofty should be coveted by the communions that in his lifetime called him an infidel. Now that his name and praise have been acknowledged by the greatest and best Christians of all modes of opinion, it is natural to desire to prove, or at any rate to insinuate, that he derived his piety from the opinions he spent his life in refuting, and not from those he took up the cross of public odium to maintain."

Some time in the year 1841 Dr. Channing heard of the death of his valued correspondent, Blanco White, and after expressing his *veneration for the rare heroism with which he sought truth*, he adds the following beautiful thought: "I have sometimes observed on the beach which I am in the habit of visiting, a solemn unceasing undertone, quite distinct from the dashings of the separate successive waves; and so, in certain minds, I observe a deep undertone of truth, even when they express particular views which seem to me discordant or false. I had always this feeling about Mr. White. I could not always agree with him, but I felt that he never lost his grasp of the greatest truths." And so, too, he felt in regard to another great soul, Theodore Parker, for whose spirit he expressed his admiration, while decidedly dissenting from some of his doctrines, in a letter to Miss Peabody, the same summer of 1841. He writes from Lenox, July 13, 1842: "I like much the Transcendental tendencies of our family." In a letter to Miss Aikin about this

period he says: "I can forgive your friend every thing but the ascription of a *priestly* spirit to me."

Thus did this open-minded and open-hearted man maintain his position and posture of freedom, reverence, and charity, amidst the doubts and discords that prevailed around him in his last years. He feared not to "prove all things," but he loved best to prove what was "good" and to prove it *by holding fast to it*, remembering that it is by being "not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of the mind," a man should "prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Influence of Nature on Channing's Religion and Theology. — As has been already repeatedly said in these pages, it was greatly owing to his communing with God in nature — to his cultivation, in other words, of natural religion — that Channing, as he himself has often said, was enabled to keep fresh and strong and clear, and even more and more so as he advanced in age, his

faith and hope and charity; and never were his expressions of his indebtedness to nature more ardent than in the very last summer he spent on earth. July 14, 1842, he writes to Miss Martineau, in language reminding one both of Wordsworth and of Byron: "Nature has been, and is, my true, dear friend. She is more than a pleasure, even a deep, substantial, elevating joy. . . . Nature does not alienate me from society, but reconciles me to it. In her order and beauty I see types and promises of a higher social state." A month later he writes, as he looks on the face of the country: "Time wears out the wrinkles on Mother Earth's brow. *The world grows younger with age.*" Thus does he fulfil in himself the words of a kindred spirit,—

> "And I could wish my days (on earth) to be
> Bound each to each by natural piety."

Channing and the Newport Church. — But we have now reached a period of Dr. Channing's life which, for the present narrator, has a peculiar personal interest. Now the biographer

has the privilege of the reminiscent. Would he could have been such by an earlier and more intimate companionship!

The last seven years of the life of Channing were the first seven of the Unitarian Church in Newport, the first meeting for forming the society having been held at the house of Dr. Channing's uncle, William Ellery, son of the Signer. And here we pause for a moment to make two remarks. The first is this: if Dr. Channing had been the denominational leader he has often been vaguely represented to have been, would this movement in his native town have begun at so late a moment? He had, indeed, some years before preached in the meeting-house of his boyhood (on the reasonableness of Christianity, from the text "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ"), but there is no account of his ever having made any special effort to start a Unitarian organization. Indeed, so little was he of a sectarian, so far from it, that when a church was gathered, and the simple and scriptural covenant was submitted for

his approval, the only thing he demurred at was the expression "believing in One God, the Father." He dreaded so to have any thing that might suggest a sectarian animus or attitude in close connection with a sacrament which had been so beset and cursed with the hedge-thorns of dogmatic and controversial intolerance, that he shrank even from the putting forward of monotheism in a way that might, by any soul, be felt to carry with it a rigid and frigid exclusiveness, and set orthodoxy of opinion above the filial and fraternal spirit.

But, on the other hand (and this is our second remark), if Dr. Channing had felt that waning of faith which has sometimes, and even to this day, been insinuated, in the distinguishing doctrines of Unitarianism, could he have preached at the dedication of the new society's house of worship that noble sermon entitled "The Worship of the Father a Service of Gratitude and Joy"? Gratitude and joy, — the words characterize his own service on that occasion.

His Dedication Sermon at Newport. — There had been some fear that Dr. Channing's health might not be equal to the task, and Dr. Hall had been invited as his substitute. The event showed that the absence of Dr. Channing would not have been unmitigated disappointment. The sermon of Dr. Hall was given in the evening of the day of dedication, and (the text being "Jesus Christ the chief corner-stone") was made singularly appropriate and impressive by his use of the old inscription which still remains scratched on one of the foundation-stones of the northwest corner of the building, — "For Christ and Peace. 1729."

His Colleague in the old Hopkins Meeting-house. — It may be of interest to mention here, in connection with this old meeting-house and the history of the new society, that one of the first to fill the old pulpit, after it became the property of the new parish, was Dr. Channing's colleague. The history of the Unitarian Church in Newport says, on the 3d of December, 1835, "occurred

the best-remembered event of that period, the preaching of that 'son of thunder' (and one might add of *lightning*), Ezra Stiles Gannett, in the old Hopkins meeting-house. . . . In the evening, when he put forth his astonishing extemporaneous power, he moved back and forth in that old pulpit, and 'lashed himself,' as one expressed it, 'to the fury of a caged lion,' — a singular image, one might deem it, to describe a man rejoicing in the liberty wherewith Christ makes the believer free; but here was one who, like Paul, *felt for those* in bonds, as bound with them," to say nothing of the local confinement of the old-fashioned preaching-box.

Channing's Charge to the first Minister of the Newport Church. — The next expression of Dr. Channing's interest in the new church was his giving the charge at the ordination of its first minister, by whom his look and tone and weighty words will not soon be forgotten, particularly one simple passage. It has often been remarked, in commenting on sensational and

violent preaching, that it is not the *thunder* that strikes, but the *lightning*. The one may strike the ear, but the other strikes the vital part. Dr. Channing, however, reminded us that there was a still more efficient agency than lightning, namely, *light*, and when, after remarking that it was light which wakes us in the morning, he exclaimed, "My brother, help men to *see!*" although that brother has succeeded but feebly in fulfilling the injunction, the impression then communicated of its importance has never faded from his memory. This same charge was repeated at the ordination of John S. Dwight, a classmate of the present writer, at Northampton, and is so printed in Channing's works.

During the summers of these last years Dr. Channing often appeared in the Unitarian Church as a worshipper, and several times, perhaps once in each summer until the last, as the preacher. It was here he first preached his great sermon on the Sunday school. Many there are who well remember the slight, fragile form, almost buried under the

broad, flapping brim of the leghorn hat, that stepped out of the commodious old country chaise at the church door, and still more vividly do they remember how, as he rose in the pulpit, that form dilated with the opening of those luminous eyes, and the sense of his slenderness of frame was lost in that of the moral greatness of the truth of which he became the organ.

And this calls to mind an expressive incident, not unlike that anecdote of the Kentuckian mentioned by William Channing. Dr. Channing was calling one day on a lady in Newport, and as he entered the gate, the well-remembered Italian exile and teacher, Signor Foresti, a man of large stature and Italian impetuosity, was just leaving the steps. As he was politely making way for the stranger to pass in, he heard the hostess say, "How do you do, Dr. Channing?" Turning back suddenly, he spread out his arms, as if half in amazement and half for an embrace, exclaiming, "What! the gr-r-eat Doctor-r Channing?" and the object of his admiration barely escaped the threatened hug.

As a hearer, Dr. Channing was patient, attentive, and encouraging. No doubt he remembered often the words of holy Herbert: —

> "If all want sense,
> God takes a text, and preacheth Pa-ti-ence."

An instance comes to mind here, which happily illustrates, by the way, his characteristic dread of exerting an influence that might hamper the freedom of a brother's thought. One Sunday the young preacher had ventured some speculations on the question whether and how far the assurance Jesus had of the truth of his convictions differed, whether in kind or only in degree, from that of other men. After service, in commenting privately on the sermon, Dr. Channing said very quietly, "I was much interested in your train of thought;" then, after a pause, "I have made up my own mind on that subject;" then relapsed into silence. One would have given more than a penny to have heard what it was. Would it, perhaps, have been what he expressed to a friend in one of those last years: "Of the formation of Christ's mind we know

nothing, and the secrecy in which his spiritual history is veiled is no small presumption against its applicableness to ourselves. Infinite wisdom has infinite modes of disciplining and unfolding the spirit. His great end of revealing to us the Perfect is equally answered, be his spiritual history what it may. All spirits, however unfolded, are essentially one."

Reminiscences of his Preaching at Newport. — In the course of those last four or five summers Dr. Channing preached in the Newport church, on the same spot and within the same framework of building where as a young man he had once preached for Dr. Hopkins, several sermons which in matter and manner were a considerable contrast to the ones that in old times used to be heard (or scarcely *heard*) within those walls. And yet the old Calvinist would hardly have felt them to be wanting in vital piety, as they breathed, at one time, the prayer, "Deliver us from evil;" at another, urged the necessity of *living to the spirit,* and not the flesh, supremely;

and at another, dwelt upon the worth of a human soul: though Hopkins's old audience would have started from their slumber could they have heard the thrilling tone in which, one Sunday afternoon, when the impatient horses of the fashionable hearers were pawing and stamping in the street, Dr. Channing, insisting upon the existence and nearness of evil from which we too needed deliverance, and of people's insensibility to it, exclaimed, "They are as indifferent to it as the very animals that stand waiting for them at the church door!"

Channing's Pulpit Manner anticipated in a Biography of Edwards. — But would not Hopkins, perhaps, have recognized in Channing's usual manner something that reminded him of his beloved Edwards? Of the latter his old biographer says: "His excellency as a preacher was very much the effect of his great acquaintance with his own heart, his inward sense and high relish of divine truths, and experimental religion. . . . His appearance in the pulpit was graceful, and his de-

livery easy, natural, and very solemn. He had not a strong, loud voice; but appeared with such gravity and solemnity, and spoke with such distinctness, clearness, and precision, his words were so full of ideas, set in such plain and striking light, that few speakers have been able so to command the attention of an audience. His words often discovered a great degree of inward fervor, without much noise or gesture, and fell with great weight on the minds of his hearers."

Alleged Coldness of Channing and Bryant. — The same superficial criticism which has been so often passed upon the poetry of Bryant is also frequently made upon the preaching of Channing, who as a preacher may be likened, in many of his best characteristics, to Bryant as a poet. The charge is that of being coldly correct, and wanting in fire and impulse. But Dewey well says: "Such was his self-control that I thought at first it was coldness; the quiet and subdued tones of his voice fell on my ear

almost like tones of apathy. But I soon learned to correct that error. I soon perceived that he was accustomed to put a strong guard upon his feelings precisely because they needed that guard." Channing had, indeed, a holy horror of exaggeration. "This is an age," he somewhere says, "of swelling words." His pulpit manner was quiet, unadorned, and with little gesture, but that the more effective, enforced chiefly by the expression of the singularly luminous eye and transparent face, and depending mainly for its effect upon the intrinsic majesty of the spoken truth. Never was there a more felicitous description of his power than in that stanza of Albert G. Greene's hymn read at the Memorial Service in Providence: —

> "How calmly he uttered his beautiful thought;
> How meekly he bore all the honors it brought;
> How bravely he spoke to oppression and wrong;
> In that calmness, that meekness, that courage, how strong!"

And equally happy, in the same direction, that stanza in John Chadwick's poem at Dr. Furness's Semi-Centennial: —

"Tell us, for thou didst know and love him well,
Of Channing's face, — of those dilating eyes,
That seemed to catch, while he was with us here,
Glimpses of things beyond the upper skies;
Tell us of that weak voice, which was so strong
To cleave asunder every form of wrong."

Channing's Traits as seen in the latest Bust of him. — As the writer of these pages sat not long since, in a meeting of ministers, fronting Sidney Morse's bust of Channing, the original seemed to live again, and breathe, and speak; and it seemed, too, as if one could read in the head and face, thus glorified in the marble, the mental, moral, and spiritual traits of the original. There was the look of wonder, inquiry, and reverence in the eyes; the eagerness to know new truth, the openness to receive it, and the firm determination to do the right it dictated with divine authority, while in the vertical lines which, like reins, enclosed the mouth, were expressed carefulness as to the tone and manner of uttering the truth, a sense of responsibility for speech, and a respect for the opinions and convictions of others.

The same reverence for truth and truthfulness which marked his manner of uttering his thoughts, guarded and guided, restrained and inspired Channing in the formation of his opinions. When Robinson bade farewell to the Pilgrims on the shore of Holland, he prophesied that there was more light yet to break forth out of the Word of God, and charged them to follow *him* no farther than they felt that he followed Christ. Channing pushed the principle farther than Robinson himself, perhaps, would then have been ready to follow it. Channing felt that new light was yet to break forth not only *from* the Word of God, as Robinson seems to have meant it, namely, the *written* Word, but new light from the inner heavens in regard to the question *where* as well as *what* is God's Word; in other words, that on the great themes of theology and humanity new light was to come from the *works* of God. Far was it from him to imagine that the "Word of God" was "bound" even between the covers of the most sacred volume.

Growing more Catholic with Age. — Thus, as he advanced in years, Channing grew in catholicity. And so, if he once said that he was less and less of a Unitarian, he meant that he was more and more a Christian, in fact, more and more a man, which was earlier and greater than either. An English Churchman once said: "Christian is my name, Catholic my surname;" meaning that he was not a *Roman*, but a *Christian Catholic*. Channing would have said that *he* was a *human Catholic*. He would have amended the Churchman's description, and said: "Christian is my first name, Catholic is my middle name, *man* is my surname," — laying the chief emphasis on the manhood and the humanity.

Channing has somewhere said, and in various forms has repeated the thought, that "the ultimate reliance of every human being is and must be on his own mind." He writes to Blanco White that "the claim of infallibility in a church must be sustained by infallible reasoning." Channing abhorred the self-sufficiency

which says, virtually at least, "You think you are right; *we know* that we are," and which puts *toleration* (that is, *condescension*) in the place of charity.

Channing at Home in his last Years. — In passing from the public to the more private life of Dr. Channing, who could venture the attempt even to supplement that closing and charming chapter of the Memoir entitled "Home Life," and particularly the pages headed "A Day at Newport," "A Sunday at Newport," and "Last Days"?

A Glimpse of him at Oakland. — But even here a few words of reminiscence may be pardoned one who was not seldom a visitor there.

To those of us who shared the privilege of seeing Dr. Channing in his last years at that lovely island home (of which the kindness of his daughter gives the reader a glimpse), it seemed like conversing with a survivor of the Apostles, — one, however, in whom a Paul and

Dr. Channing's Summer Residence, Oakland, R. I.

a John were blended, but who had more of the later than the earlier Peter.

How perfectly in keeping was the whole air of that tranquil retreat — "the soft and soul-like sound" of the breeze among the branches, and all the music, silent and audible, of animate and inanimate nature — with the spirit of the man who made the place an object of sacred pilgrimage to visitors from the farthest corner of the land and from across the sea! It was with some reluctance that we young men ventured to intrude upon his retirement, for we felt how he must have to economize his time and strength for the work which we knew he still had before him; and this feeling revived as a kind of compunction when, after his death, his papers revealed what a vast work he had laid out for himself. We were consoled, however, by reflecting that these interruptions of solitary study were perhaps, after all, good for him, though possibly they only continued his studies in another form. For he would sit for the most part in the seat of the inquirer and learner,—

a sore trial, at times, to our modesty, though we remembered that a wise man knows how to extract wisdom from folly itself. Sometimes, though seldom, where he found an appreciative audience, he would indulge in a monologue which, but for its clearness and lucidity, we might call Coleridgean; and once, when he had taken us up a sunny track, he suddenly left us in mid-height, to go and rest for half an hour (leaving us half-amused and half-awed, so that we could scarcely speak to each other), and then returned and resumed his quiet talk, and kept his way upward till we reached the clouds, and came back to earth.

Then he would do what he loved best, namely, invite us out, and introduce us to his beloved and revered mother, Nature. And as we walked or sat on the circular seat round the great beech-tree ("a mother surrounded by her children," as he once said to us), there "under the shade of the broad-spreading beech-tree" the Muses *we* meditated were more likely to be those of theology and humanity.

Sometimes at least, in his way of telling an anecdote, he would show gleamings of a latent humor, as when he described how, in the midst of the appalling denunciations of a certain revivalist (perhaps Tennant) in the neighborhood, the milder brother whose pulpit he was occupying, and who sat below facing the audience, slowly rose and, looking up at the speaker, exclaimed, "Brother Tennant! Brother Tennant! Is there *no* balm in Gilead, is there no physician there?"

And when this saintly man himself had occasion to admonish a brother privately, it was more like a benediction than an admonition, more like a healing than a wound.

His closing Days not a Decline, but an Ascension. — With such a man the decline of life is not a going *down* into the dark valley, so much as a climbing of the serene, sunny mountain. Read his later and familiar letters (so much of them, at least, as his nephew has given us in his third volume), and see how beautifully and cor-

dially he expresses his growing love of nature, his welcome of spring, his fine feeling of atmospheric suggestions. This is to him "a spiritual pleasure, rather than a physical," and seems to him "not unworthy our future existence." Twice he expresses and emphasizes with strong sympathy the idea of Henry More, that the air breathing upon him was the very influence of the Holy Spirit. "How can I convey to you," he writes to a friend, "the music of the trees this moment in my ear, made by a fresh south-wind after a shower last night? And yet this is one of my *events*." Again he says: "I certainly do not love nature less, but more, as the time approaches for leaving it. Is not this a sign that I shall not leave it, that I am preparing to enjoy it in higher forms?" And again: "I almost wonder at myself when I think of the pleasure which the dawn gives me, after having witnessed it so many years."

And so to the last. The new day, the new year, the return of spring, the breaking forth of new light in the world of thought, the laugh and

leap of childhood, — all are to him presentiments of immortality.

His Sunday Talks to the Farmers. — For several summers of the last years of his life, Dr. Channing often spoke, of a Sunday afternoon, at the little Christian Church in Portsmouth, a few steps from his home. It was not so much a preaching as a familiar talk, and in the very last years he would speak sitting. On these occasions he could hardly help being a little disturbed by the numbers of summer visitors from Newport; many of whom, to be sure, had no other opportunity of hearing the remarkable man. Still this throng of curious people must have seemed scarcely congenial to his purpose and wishes, being, in a sense, *spectators of a process*, instead of humble auditors and seekers. A lady of Newport, who was then a mere child, remembers being taken by her parents in the family chaise to one of those meetings, and her most vivid recollection (as would naturally be the case with a child) is his not having

taken any text, but simply looking round upon the farmer folk and beginning in his low, sweet voice: "This is a beautiful world!" It must have reminded her of St. John coming in to his "little children" at Ephesus.

His last Journeyings. — The last year or two of his life, too feeble for concentrated mental effort, Dr. Channing would spend in journeying to see his scattered friends in city and country (with whom he had kept up a lively correspondence), and to look largely upon the face of the great mother, Nature, his nursing-mother and life-long friend and intimate. It was only a little more than a year before his death, in 1841, that he visited Philadelphia and gave his great sermon on the Church. The next spring he went up to Berkshire; it seemed as if he were called by the voice of the Spirit to "go up higher;" having opened his eyes upon the ocean, he was to close them upon the mountains, those "near neighbors" of the skies.

Those last excursions were full of serene hap-

piness. "Amidst such truly elysian beauty," he writes, "the chains which the spirit wears are broken, and it goes forth to blend with and to enjoy the universe. . . . Is there not a day of release at hand?" Yes, there was.

Meanwhile he was fulfilling the beautiful prediction of the Prophet: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." Eight years before, when his mother died, he had written that "the winter of her age [she was eighty-two years old] seemed warmed and brightened with the fervor of youthful feeling." And now he too seemed to be growing younger as he approached the eternal world. It was as if the air of heaven, breathing through the trees of life and from the river of life, wafted an immortal freshness to his brow. More and more he saw God and felt his presence in Nature. Time wrote no wrinkles on *her* azure brow.

The Last of Earth, the First of Heaven. — And so, as his days wore on to their earthly close, Chan-

ning went onward from strength to strength, from breadth to breadth, from height to height, onward and upward, till the day when, with his dying vision resting upon the hills, which were to him the hills of God, — "up to the hills" to which his eyes had ever been lifted, "the eternal hills beyond the skies," — with the words of the mountain-sermon in his ear, and love to God and man in his heart, — in the calm evening of a peaceful Sunday, his spirit ascended into heaven.

Among his last words, beside the touching ones his nephew records, were these, on overhearing some talk about arrangements for the night: "You need not be anxious concerning to-night. It will be very peaceful and quiet with me." And so it was.

Theodore Parker finely and truly said: "He turned his face toward that sinking orb, and he and the sun went away together. Each, as the other, left the smile of his departure spread on all around, — the sun on the clouds; he on the heart."

And still on those hills, and on the hearts of all who in imagination go back and watch through those farewell hours, the light of his memory lingers with blessed and immortal radiance. And ever since he went up, thoughtful souls, of every name, have vied with each other in a growing appreciation of the wondrously balanced traits of his character.

Tributes to his Memory. — In his own denomination, it need not be said, the finest minds and the noblest souls, not only when the tidings of his death first reached them, but often ever since, whenever some anniversary or other occasion called him vividly to remembrance, have labored (if such a genial effort can be called *labor*) to supplement each other's tributes to the quality of his spirit and his work. It would be a gratifying task to enumerate and analyze the leading sermons which the death of Channing called forth from such men as Martineau, and our own Gannett, Dewey, Hall, Bellows, Clarke, Ellis, Parker, and others. They

ought to be printed together; they would form one of the best exponents of what, for the want of a better name, we call Liberal Christianity, beside helping, each in its way, to the presentation of a complete estimate of the character which has so impressed each one of them.

Parker's "Humble Tribute." — Perhaps the most remarkable discourse which the occasion elicited was that fervent, impromptu outpouring (outburst, one might almost say) of reverent and loving admiration, — Theodore Parker's "Humble Tribute." Justly discriminative in its philosophical estimate, it is at the same time an overflowing attestation of personal gratitude to a spiritual benefactor and father. He affirms that "Dr. Channing has done more than any other of the Christian writers to make religion beautiful and winning. . . . No one of our century, in England or America, has done so much as he, to set forth the greatness of man's nature, the loveliness of Jesus, and the goodness of God. In this respect he is the father of us all. . . . It

is not easy to find a writer since the days of John the Evangelist, on whom piety is so universal, so lovely, and, above all, so attractive. It has all the strength of St. Augustine without his extravagant asceticism, all the sweetness of Kempis or Hugh de St. Victor or Böhme or Law without their dreamy mysticism and aqueous sentimentality." He was "a fountain of healing water, fed by five perennial springs; his moral fidelity, his pious heart, his love of man, his forgetfulness of self, and the careful cultivation of his gifts, — these were the secret of his eloquence and power. . . . Each year brought him new wisdom and new power of speech. He was a rare example of a man, after half a century of life, growing yearly more eloquent. The cause is plain. The eloquence that comes of tropes and figures and brilliant thought may fade with the fading sense; but the eloquence that comes of a moral purpose, of a religious trust, deepens with that zeal, and grows brighter as that faith rises higher and more high. . . . Each season the flowers and

the stars had a new beauty in his eyes. Nature and man grew yearly in his esteem." As to his liberalism, "this must be said of Dr. Channing, that, if he was slow in coming to the principles and method of a liberal theology, he never forsook them, but went farther than his former friends, to some conclusions logically unavoidable, but now vehemently denied."

But beyond the bounds of his own and any sect or land, the name and memory of Channing have found a cordial, Christian, and human recognition.

Rare Episcopal Testimony. — An Episcopal clergyman only recently, in acknowledging the gift of a copy of Channing's works, wrote to the Secretary of the Unitarian Association: "I have the honor to belong to an association of Episcopal clergymen of thoughtful and broad sympathies. . . . At the last meeting it was resolved to recognize the Centennial of Channing, and pay honor to his memory, by having a paper prepared by some member who would treat

the subject in a loving and reverent and sympathetic spirit, to be read at a future meeting, which should be devoted to the consideration of his work in the world, especially of Christian thought and activity. On me was put the honor of appointment to this pleasant task.

"I have related this fact, since it cannot fail to have a special interest for those who are in the direct line of Apostolic succession from this Apostolic man."

A glowing Methodist Eulogium. — And, a few years after Channing's death, a distinguished Methodist brother, in one of the most magnanimous and intelligent tributes to his memory (though finding Channing "such an anomaly among Unitarians as Fénelon was among Romanists," too pious for a Unitarian and not enough so for a Methodist), went even so far as to say: "Such a man as Dr. Channing must have stood majestically in advance of his age, whenever and wherever he had lived. He lived, according to the sense of the present generation, at

least, in the best age of the world, and yet was far in front of it; if it reaches his radiant position in two centuries, the signs of the times are certainly quite illusive." So wrote Dr. Abel Stevens in the "Methodist Quarterly" of January, 1849, and closes his paper with these still stronger words: "As the visitor wanders among the shaded aisles of the western part of Mount Auburn, he sees a massive monument of marble designed by Allston, the poet-painter. Generous and brave men from whatever clime resort to it, and go from it more generous and brave; for there reposes the great and good man whom we have commemorated. The early beams, intercepted by neighboring heights, fall not on the spot; but the light of high noon, and the later and benigner rays of the day, play through the foliage in dazzling gleams on the marble, — a fitting emblem of his fame; for when the later and better light which is yet to bless our desolate race shall come, it will fall with bright illustration on the character of this rare man, and on the great aims of his life." Is not

this a Liberal Christian indeed, who can write thus?

Echoes from Europe. — But indeed, in all nations as well as denominations of the civilized world, the name of Channing is a household word, a watchword of freedom, of justice, and of humanity. On the other side of the ocean the celebrated French Protestant, M. de Rémusat, wrote of him: —

"It was not the Federal Street Society alone, that wept the loss of an eloquent and pious pastor; it was not the city of Boston alone, that regretted one of its noblest ornaments; all America deplored the death of a generous and enlightened citizen; and when, on passing out from the sacred enclosure, they heard, all at once, the funeral bell of the Catholic cathedral toll in honor of him who had so well understood and loved their bishop, Cheverus, every one felt that Channing was of no sect, of no one communion, but that his most ardent wish was realized, and that he belonged only to the universal Church of Christ."

Frederick Robertson's enthusiastic expressions may not be known to some of our readers. "I should be very glad," he says, "if half of those who recognize the hereditary claims of the Son of God to worship, bowed down before his moral dignity with an adoration half as profound or a love half as enthusiastic as Dr. Channing's. I wish I, a Trinitarian, loved and adored him any thing near the way in which that Unitarian felt. . . . Pray do not give up 'Channing's Life' [by his nephew], nor read it by starts, but consecutively, and, if possible, regularly every day, at a fixed hour."

So it may be said of Channing, his words have gone out through the world, and his thought to the ends of the earth. In England, in France, in Italy, in Germany, in Hungary, he is domesticated; in many a foreign tongue his writings are translated, and thousands of differing creeds honor his rational religion, his enlightened piety, and his wise philanthropy. He is preached in pulpits where he could not have preached in his lifetime. The incident is

familiar to all, of Sydney Smith's saying at the close of a Sunday's sermon, "Do not imagine that this sermon is mine, — I cannot do such things, — it is by an American, Dr. Channing." The writer of this book, happening some years ago to be in Calcutta and to attend service at the English Church, which was glorying in the ministrations of an eloquent young preacher, was struck with the familiar sound of certain portions of the sermon; and when the preacher came to a climax with the words almost literally repeated, "There are times when to be still demands immeasurably higher strength than to act," the mystery was cleared up; and upon a subsequent introduction to the preacher, his American hearer having suggested the striking coincidence with Channing, the reply was, "No wonder my discourse should smack of Channing; he is always lying by me on my table; in fact, he is my *Vade Mecum*."

French Admirers of Channing. — Some twenty-five years ago that great friend of America,

Laboulaye, passing along the Quai Voltaire, picked up a volume of Channing, and presently was running hither and thither to his friends, crying, "I have discovered a great man!" And forthwith he began, and for several years continued, translating and publishing, with biographic and analytical prefaces, several of Channing's leading lectures in the cause of humanity; and several years ago he collected these into a volume, to which he prefixed a short but exceedingly appreciative sketch of Channing's life, which ought to be translated into English. He says: "In the history of religion, I believe Unitarianism destined to take a prominent place, for it is the last term of free inquiry, and (to speak my whole thought) to it belongs the future of Protestantism." He speaks of Unitarianism as a system which presents "Christianity as the perfection of philosophy, and revelation the perfection of reason." And he quotes a comparison of Channing's, that "both are the same light, with the difference of dawn and noonday." "To found an immutable church

on the principle of free inquiry, of individual sovereignty, is," he says, "a problem as impossible as to establish an unchangeable government on universal suffrage. . . . If Channing had been but one sectary more in the religious Babel, one would not have called attention to him." But he welcomes in him the "Christian Rationalist," — one who rises above mere philosophy in recognizing that immense event, "the regeneration of the human race by the word of a man," and who stands apart from the mere Orthodox in recognizing that "God has set the principle of union not in the mind, but in the heart of man." And he concludes with commending to his countrymen the study of that "good man, who all his life, consumed by one sentiment and one idea, sought truth and justice with all the forces of his intellect, and loved God and man with all the strength of his heart."

Thus far Mr. Laboulaye; and now, within a year or two, a French Catholic, M. Lavollée, has written an enthusiastic book, "crowned by

the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences," entitled "Channing: His Life and his Doctrine," in which occur these remarkable paragraphs: "In whatever he says or writes he is always the apostle of universal love and fraternity; this is his first and most distinctive character. He has another, and that is a youthful confidence and daring (*audace*) which age can never chill. In every circumstance and on all questions he pushes to the extreme his efforts as well as his hopes. In the pursuit of this end he shows himself animated by a faith equal to that which fired the Apostles and the first Christians. He never lets himself be stopped by any obstacle; he never doubts of success in the most difficult enterprises. He applies to Christian propagandism the truly American maxim which his compatriots take for their guide in their commercial enterprises as in their political campaigns: 'Go ahead, fear nothing, help yourself' (*En avant, ne crains rien, aide-toi toi-même*)." One would think he might have given Channing the credit at least

of modifying the absoluteness of the motto with that other very important clause: "First, be sure you 're right," though, to be sure, some one has said there is this difference between English and American railroad conductors, — the former cry, "All right, go ahead!" and the latter, "Go ahead, all right!"

But the writer, after a few paragraphs, proceeds: "How is it possible not to admire in the works of Channing, by the side of his dogmatic errors, the sublime moral portrait which he draws of Jesus Christ, and the profound sentiment of veneration, gratitude, and love which animates, so to speak, every line of these inspired pages? How can one help loving, in Channing, the defender of all the oppressed, the advocate of all the miserable, the truly Christian apostle, consecrating his energies and his life to the cause of the emancipation of the negro, to the spread of popular education, to the moral amelioration of workingmen? How can one help pardoning in him, after so many noble efforts, an excess of opti-

mism and of confidence, carried perhaps to the very verge of illusion?" And then follows this extraordinary parallel: "It is in these noble qualities, in his love of Christ, his humanity, his invincible hope, finally and especially in his infinite faith in the Divine compassion, that Channing resembles his constant model, Fénelon; but, side by side with these points of approximation in character and doctrine, there exist numerous differences between the Catholic Archbishop of Cambrai and the Unitarian pastor of Boston, between the prelate of the seventeenth century and the minister of the nineteenth. If both equally reprove war and slavery, they have neither the same way of viewing nor of combating them. The one invokes only the precepts of the divine law; the other prefers to base himself on those inalienable rights which are essential to the very nature of man. Both have vowed to Jesus Christ a love equally lively and profound, but while the one adores and prays, the other contemplates and reveres. In their lives, in their

characters, the contrast still holds. Fénelon is the more ardent, Channing the more practical; the one is a poet, the other a controversialist, [singular perversion of the fact!] Fénelon is a writer of the first order, Channing is rather a thinker; Fénelon is a century at least in advance of his contemporaries, Channing inherits and profits by all the ideas put in circulation by the eighteenth century and by the Revolution; Fénelon takes faith as the rule of his reason, Channing attributes to reason an absolute and unlimited supremacy; Fénelon is a theologian and a Catholic, Channing is pre-eminently a moralist and hardly Christian.

"From this point of view," the writer goes on, "we may find some analogy between Channing and his illustrious compatriot, Benjamin Franklin. With both, the same respect for the moral laws, the same affectionate interest in the laboring classes, the same desire to elevate them in their own eyes and in the eyes of the world by instruction and education, the same practical counsels given in the same spirit of paternal

solicitude. Franklin, however, resembles Channing still less than Fénelon does. He is utilitarian and cold, while Channing is ardent and enthusiastic; he deduces his moral precepts from the lessons of experience, while Channing represents them as flowing from the nature of man and from the will of God; he assigns as the supreme object of our efforts happiness, while Channing is constantly sounding in our ears the great word Duty. Channing would be a stoic if he were not a Christian [an apparent contradiction, this last acknowledgment, to the end of the previous paragraph]; Franklin, if he were not, above all, of his own time and country, would follow Cicero and Plato in the gardens of Academus.

"Neither Fénelon nor Franklin carries so far as Channing his faith in the doctrines of humanity."

A few specimens may be given of this writer's strictures on Channing's heresies: —

"A similar want of logic is seen in the idea he forms of the nature of Jesus Christ. Who is this

incomprehensible Being, who is not God, but who has the divine perfection, who is not man, but who is clothed in a human body? Is not here a mystery even more incomprehensible than that of the Catholic Trinity? Arius made the Word the creature of God the Father, but he recognized its divinity; the Free-thinkers will not see in Jesus any thing but an inspired man; to the Jews he is an impostor; with the Catholics he is God himself, descended to the earth and invested with our humanity. These all are logical; Channing alone is not, with that strange conception of a Son of God who finds himself, in some sort, placed between heaven and earth, and whom one can liken to nothing but the demigods of Paganism. . . . Another example of Channing's contradictions: he considers the passage of Jesus Christ over the earth as the most admirable lesson ever given to man; he recognizes in all his words, in all his works, the divine imprint, and yet he refuses to see a God in the Crucified of Calvary. But has he comprehended what becomes then of that

scene of sorrows, of cruelties, of defeats, and of treason, which begins at the Garden of Olives and ends at Golgotha? If the Passion is not an expiation, it is one of the most hideous, the most revolting, the most criminal spectacles that were ever offered to the eyes of men. If Christ is not the divine ransom of humanity, his cross is the most odious of gibbets, his death is the most bloody outrage upon Divine justice. How was it possible for a soul so pure, so sweet, so full of love as that of Channing to give birth to an idea so monstrous?"

The reference here is to the famous illustration of the "Central Gallows" in the sermon at Mr. Sparks's ordination, but it is curious to see how the critic unconsciously himself enforces Dr. Channing's own argument. Well has it been said by an English critic in a late Review: "If they [the Liberals] regard the sufferer as a God-like man rather than a man-like God, it is not *they* who make the sacrifice less awful to the human imagination, or the submission less sublime."

Here is another of the same writer's strictures: "Logically applied, free inquiry issues in the negation of the supernatural in the absolute reign of reason. Thus we see many Protestants arrive insensibly at rationalism, and Protestantism, as a whole, degenerate, by little and little, into philosophism. When it attempts to stop on that fatal slope, to formulate a body of doctrines, to fix in some sort a *minimum* of beliefs, it is unfaithful to its principle; it deviates toward the idea of collective revelation, of doctrinal instruction and authority; it is not slow in arriving at full Catholicism."

Renan says of Channing: "Those who appreciate a religion according to its simplicity and its degree of transparency ought to be charmed with this one. Certain it is, that, if the modern mind is right in craving a religion which, without excluding the supernatural, diminishes the dose as much as possible, the religion of Channing is the purest and most perfect which has hitherto appeared. . . . His theology is, at bottom, all that theology can be in the nineteenth century

and in America, — plain, simple, honest, practical; a theology *à la* Franklin, without great metaphysical reach or transcendental scope. . . . On this point Channing never arrived at a perfectly clear formula of his own thought. . . . If not the founder, Channing is certainly the *saint* of the Unitarians. . . . The true mission of Channing was clearly all moral. He was a Vincent de Paul minus the devotion, a Cheverus minus the sacerdotal unction. He was not a genuine rationalist, for what sort of a rationalist is he who admits miracles, prophecies, a revelation? But then he was not a man of faith, for faith demands the impossible; it is not satisfied except at that price. . . . If the problem of the world could have been resolved by rectitude of heart, simplicity and moderation of spirit, Channing would have resolved it. . . . The least inconvenience of Channing's world would be that it would die of ennui. Genius would be useless; grand art impossible."

It is evident that a Renan *could* not under-

stand a Channing. Perhaps it would be too much to say that a French nature could not. What can be more superficial than the idea that Channing rejects or slights the mysterious element because he discards *contradictions* and mathematical *impossibilities* as fatal alike to reason and to faith?

I have translated this remarkable *mélange* of half-truth and untruth from a writer who, on the whole, is enthusiastically eulogistic of Channing, because it answers well enough, making allowance for French idiosyncrasies, to certain superficial and perverse misrepresentations of Channing's position and principles even in his own country.

For example, when Channing's rationalism is reprobated, as if it were something opposite to reverence and religiousness, how strangely and superficially do his critics ignore the patent fact that he *religiously reveres* human reason as the very image of God in man, the inspiration of the Almighty, who giveth man understanding; and that his grand aim is to persuade or pro-

voke his fellow-men to feel that reason involves a religious responsibility, and that even an Apostle exhorts men to be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in them.

But to say that, in thus honoring reason, Channing sets it above faith or in the place of faith, the wondering and adoring sentiment of the soul, is grossly to misread his pages. He rejoices in extending the bounds of light, feeling that God *is* Light, but beyond and behind all he recognizes that mystery, infinite to created beings, before which faith waits in reverent trust.

Channing Unitarianism. — It has been the fashion in some quarters to affix to the name of Channing a variety of disparaging epithets, — the very variety of which, when they are rightly considered, would seem to redound to the credit of his breadth of nature. He has been called a mystic *and* a rationalist, a radical, an individualist, an egotist, an optimist, a *Chan-*

If to be a Unitarian means to believe in the one, sole, supreme, self-existent God the Father; if it means, in the words of the Elder Coquerel, to believe that "Christ is above all, and God above Christ;" if it means to acknowledge the same *kind* of unity between the Son and the Father as between the Father and the whole family of his true children in heaven and earth; if it means to hold to the oneness of true religion and true morality; if it means to have faith in the Father as one and unchangeable in his fatherly disposition and designs through all eternity, — then was Channing a stanch, decided, pronounced Unitarian to the last. "Christ," says a critic already quoted, Professor Fisher of New Haven, "was really, if not theoretically, more to him than a teacher and an example." Of course he was, as he is to every true Christian; not, however, in his nature more than a human being, but simply an immortal, ever-present friend and inspiring companion, elder brother of the race, and captain of our salvation, captain of the great army

of martyrs. But if they who have departed from certain of Channing's opinions, who have become more humanitarian, more of restorationists, more of naturalists than he, as regards speculative doctrine, are set down as recreant to Channing Unitarianism, the reproach shows a grievous failure to perceive what were the Unitarian principles dearest to Channing's heart.

Channing's Independence needed To-day. — In writing the life of a man like Channing, such as these pages have presented him, it is impossible, consistently with the spirit and scope of this biography, to avoid asking now, Would this man, were he living among us to-day, be any less independent, any less free, or any less fervent than he was in the last years of his life on earth? Would he not have had to bear, and would he not have borne with growing patience and cheerfulness, his share of the opprobrium which, in an age fond of nicknames as an easy way of characterizing and classifying men, has

to be borne by every man who follows the religion of reason, and accepts whatever seems to him good in all sects and systems? Would he not be reproached to-day at once as a time-server and as a free-thinker, as a conservative and as a radical? Channing, rightly understood, is, indeed, a name for both the rationalist and the religionist to conjure by. Indeed, when we consider how Jesus and John have been in all these centuries claimed as authority, with equal confidence, by Trinitarians and Unitarians, by Naturalists and Supernaturalists, by Arians and Humanitarians, the fact that Channing is appealed to by such opposite schools of opinion as each one's peculiar patron saint, should be set down as a strong indication that his is the way of truth.

Channing and Creed-making. — When, a few years ago, that memorable crisis came in the history of our Unitarian fellowship, at which it was thought by some to be high time that we should take a new departure,— that we should

give up the good old plan of *lengthening the cords* of fellowship, and so *strengthening* the *stakes* of faith, — that we should put ourselves into *uniform*, so as to know ourselves and make ourselves known, — in other words, and without a figure, that we should, at our National Conference, adopt a creed and make ourselves more distinctively and decidedly a sect, — who can doubt, if Channing had been still amongst us, what would have been his mind and word in the matter, — what *he* would have thought and said, who so often and so earnestly, in his last years and in the growing light of the eternal life, emphasized the superiority of the inward and spiritual *drawing* to any outward and formal *binding*, as means and motive of Christian union; arguing that though in this way the benefit of *authority* might be lost, and the unity of the *sect* threatened, still no unity was " of any worth, except the attraction subsisting among those who hold, not nominally but really, not in words but with profound conviction and love, the same great truths."

William Ware's Estimate. — In the November number of the "Christian Examiner" for 1842, — the month after his death, appeared a glowing eulogy on Dr. Channing, undoubtedly from the pen of the editor, William Ware, a man utterly free from extravagance, who, after dwelling at some length on the peculiar value of Channing's work and life as an exposition of the heart and soul of the Unitarian gospel, goes on to say, "He was most wanted after the controversy had subsided," and adds: "It was like the Israelites going out of the bondage of Egypt; they were going to a fairer, freer land, flowing with milk and honey, — but what a waste wilderness between! . . . He took up the Liberal creed, if creed it can be called, which has no more the form and systematic method of a creed than the Gospel of John has, or the teachings of Christ, — but such as it was he took it into the embrace of his clear, capacious intellect, his elevated, ardent soul; he fixed upon it the heaven-beaming glance of his spirit's eye, and with his vigorous pen and his simple but glowing eloquence he made it a

creed indeed — no, not a creed, but a religion, all one with the very Gospel of Christ." He "did more . . . to reproduce the original, unmixed Christianity on the earth, the knowledge and conception of what it really is, than any other man since the Apostles' days. Those simple doctrines of Christ, hard to be recognized as doctrines, they were so simple, he *made* them doctrines, as Christ did, *the* doctrines, the essential ones, the gospel."

Is not this a just estimate of Channing's work and spirit, and, thus described, is there any less use for "Channing Unitarianism" (not to say less *need* of it) than there ever was?

Channing's Literary Merits and Style. — It has been already said that Channing became an author by accident; he himself said so. He never cared to think of himself as a *littérateur;* and yet it is noteworthy that his sermons had a leading part with those of his great contemporaries, Buckminster and the rest, in giving the sermon a place here in literature, *as* literary

production, and not mere sectarian, theological, political, or historical matter, — a place, in short, in *polite* literature, and among the *humanities*. Channing himself, indeed, repeatedly disclaims paying any special attention to *mere* style. In his letters to Miss Aikin he expresses his admiration for that of Goldsmith, and his own inability to approach him. Even the "rare grace" of Addison he pronounces "beyond his reach;" but he seems almost to envy Goldsmith, who, he says, "unites with Addison's wonderful ease and *nature* a sweetness all his own. Such writers as Addison and Goldsmith," he adds, "make me feel my own great defects. The eloquent style, as it is called, I might make some approach to. But the spontaneous grace of these writers is beyond me." May we not add, that it was aside from *his* sphere?

The style of Channing is plain, pure, and perspicuous. It has the transparency of a clear, calm autumn afternoon, when no haze dims the serenity of the atmosphere. Sometimes, though more rarely, it has the sober splendor of those

after-summer hours, when a mingled mellowness and brilliancy charm the beholder. But, withal, it is marked by a self-contained quietness and even flow. It has an ease which never degenerates into that inflated and turgid manner which sometimes impairs the style of his classmate, Judge Story. It has a certain chaste elegance, but is remarkably free from ornament; deals very sparingly in figures, and scarcely uses one, excepting where the figure is not mere ornament but argument; resembling, so far, more the style of Webster than that of Everett.

In his remarks on Milton's prose, Channing says: "The best style is not that which puts the reader the most easily and in the shortest time in possession of a writer's naked thoughts, but that which is the truest image of a great intellect, which conveys fully and carries farthest into other souls the conceptions and feelings of a profound and lofty spirit. . . . A full mind will naturally overflow in long sentences. . . . We delight in long sentences in which a great truth, instead of being broken up

into numerous periods, is spread out in its full proportions, is irradiated with a variety of illustration and imagery, is set forth in a splendid affluence of language, and flows, like a full stream, with a majestic harmony which fills at once the ear and soul."

It is remarkable that while thus eulogizing Milton's grand, swelling, sonorous periods, he himself is fond, in his own case, of short sentences; and yet it is not that he loves to condense his thought into pithy, epigrammatic, sparkling utterances. Very few such, comparatively, occur in his pages. But he is fond of turning a thought round and round, that, like a precious stone, it may send forth a new light from every side; changing the figure suddenly, one might say that he is not long-breathed. But be the explanation what it may, we find it to be a characteristic of Channing's writing, that it is broken up into short sentences, and that we are constantly stopped by a period where we should expect only a semicolon. This reiteration is remarkable.

The comparison of Channing's clearness of style to that of a cloudless atmosphere suggests the remark that, like the air, it is colorless until you look through a long field of it. Channing himself somewhere lays down the rule that the preacher's style should be free from that poetic coloring which would distract the hearer from the moral and practical point and purpose. Perhaps the severity of his requirements in this direction is somewhat too narrow. It would have been hard to apply his rule to such men as Father Taylor or Jeremy Taylor. "The style is *the man*." Channing's was true to his own thought and temperament.

It has been often remarked how very rarely Channing quotes from others, and, on the other hand, how few single sentences there are in his works that are quotable, and have become "familiar quotations." A few such there are,—such as, "All minds are of one family;" "There are times when to be still demands immeasurably higher strength than to act;" "The ultimate reliance of every human being

is and must be on his own mind;" "Honor all men, fear no man;" "All glory is of the soul;" "To be universally intelligible is not the highest merit,"— but, generally, Channing is better remembered by whole paragraphs than by separate sentences.

The poetic, the imaginative element was, in Channing's style, as has been said already, kept under severe subjection and subordination to the practical purposes of his writing. Still, at times his thought would rise into a strain of richly colored and euphonious diction, of which here are two examples. In the article on Fénelon, speaking of the peace of God, the peace of religion, he says: "It is more than silence after storms. It is as the concord of all melodious sounds. Has the reader never known a season when, in the fullest flow of thought and feeling, in the universal action of the soul, an inward calm, profound as midnight silence, yet bright as the still summer noon, full of joy, but unbroken by one throb of tumultuous passion, has been breathed through his spirit, and given him

a glimpse and presage of the serenity of a happier world? Of this character is the peace of religion."

Again, toward the close of his letter to Mr. Clay on the annexation of Texas, he has this beautiful thought: "I have prepared this letter, not amidst the goadings, irritations, and feverish tumults of a crowded city, but in the stillness of retirement, amid scenes of peace and beauty. Hardly an hour has passed, in which I have not sought relief from the exhaustion of writing, by walking abroad amidst God's works, which seldom fail to breathe tranquillity, and which, by their harmony and beneficence, continually cheer me, as emblems and prophecies of a more harmonious and blessed state of human affairs than has yet been known."

If there is little of epistolary and conversational freedom and familiarity in Channing's pulpit style, in his letters he certainly escapes the stately manner. After all, we must own that *his* style was best suited to his theme and treat-

Under the title "Channing" in Charles Knight's Encyclopædia, some writer ventures a judgment and a prediction which, it is safe to say, unless the concurrent voice of cultured and Christian people strangely misleads us, are destined not to be sustained by the voice, or rather the silence, of time. He says: "Channing is one of the most striking writers America has produced; and his works, beside their attractions of style, are all animated by a pure and lofty moral spirit. His eloquence, however, though often imposing, has not much nature or real fire; its splendor is mostly verbal; the thoughts are true and just, rather than new or profound; it is exciting on a first perusal, but will hardly bear a second. Nothing that he has written, therefore, has much chance of long retaining its reputation; there is too little in it of the spirit of life; too little of any thing that can be called its own, and that is not to be found elsewhere. Both in its rhetorical character, however, and in its strain of sentiment it was well calculated to produce an immediate

effect." This we may venture to call a literary curiosity.

Careful Method in Composition. — But Channing's great aim, so far as the form of expression is concerned, was *truth* to his convictions, to himself. His nephew gives a detailed account of his method of composition, — the extreme care and thoroughness with which he went about his mental work. The pigeon-holes of his desk were left full of those little square folded leaves, containing the first jottings-down of the thoughts which he was afterward to fill out and write out and expand. One such liliputian sheet is here copied literally. "God is working all around us — perpetually, infinitely — We think we ascribe to him labor in supposing every motion in the boundless universe willed by him — But how easy are infinite operations to omnipotence. Millions of motions demand no more labor than one —

"One distinction between human and divine power: that the works of the former go on by

interrupted labor and come to their end — In God's we see perpetual action — The plant grows every moment without a pause — There is no rest in nature. The plant, indeed, fully develops itself, but not to stand still, like a human machine — It begins immediately to decay — A new series of changes immediately commences — The Divine Artificer has no need of *keeping* his works — They are poured forth in infinite profusion —

"Another distinction is: Man works on *masses* — with coarse tools — never penetrates to the elements — Nature accomplishes its purposes by minutest and most delicate operations — No coarse machinery clothes a tree with verdure with a few strokes. Every leaf is distinctly elaborated, pencilled, by the gradual influence of countless and invisible particles.

"May we not suppose the Infinite Artificer finding a pure delight in every product of skill — as we do — Is not intelligence in action, realizing its ideas, producing effects by happiest combinations, a happy intelligence — Is

not the Divine mind every moment enjoying its numberless works of power —

"Is [not] God every moment *working before* us, as truly as a man — In the expansion of every flower is not God as plainly manifest as we see human agency in a growing painting or machine — *How near* —

"In manufactories what a din — how offensive the smell — Enter a field, the divine laboratory. We boast of a thousand spindles — How much more complicated, exquisite apparatus in every blade of grass — Each grows separate.

"Is dissolution allowed, to call forth this perpetual energy in renovation —

"Winter — what occasion it gives for new manifestations of power — and skill — The safety of animals and plants — "

Specimens of the Sententious from Channing's Letters. — Dr. Miles, in his little volume of "Thoughts from Channing," says: "There is probably no other author of the age from whose

works a greater number of striking detached thoughts may be gathered." But this can hardly be true, if he means thoughts expressed in single sentences, and unless he applies the remark to paragraphs and pages. Otherwise what Dr. Bellows said of Channing is surely nearer the truth, that "there are few great writers from whom so few splendid passages could be selected." The very quality of Dr. Channing's style, indeed, makes this to be so.

If, however, Dr. Miles had applied his remark to Channing's correspondence, it could have been more plausibly sustained; and a collection similar to his made from Dr. Channing's letters and private papers would be a pithy and precious remembrancer and companion. Here are a few, for example: "Once reverie was the hectic of my life; now meditation has become the life of my soul." "To speak on interesting subjects is the ground of sincerity." "Let me first feel the force of truth myself, and then impress it on others." "In conversation let me draw persons from evil-speaking and contention,

and painful or injurious subjects, by catching some thought suggested, and making it the ground of remark." "Great objects make great minds." "A wise man seeks to shine in himself; a fool, to outshine others." "The wise man considers what he wants; the fool, what he abounds in." "Are not thoughts *voluntary?* Do they not originate in *active* principles?" "In connecting with a thing *all that belongs to it* we become *acquainted* with it." "All objects may be viewed as expressions of goodness." "He is miserable who makes pleasure his business." "Let me never talk of my zeal for souls, *except* with *God*." "Children should never be deceived. . . . It is better to let them cry than to give them a lesson in manœuvring." "They very slowly learn that others feel as keenly as themselves." "We waste the present for a future which never comes." "I smile when I hear poetry called *light reading*." "The highest genius, I believe, is a self-guiding, calm, comprehensive power. It creates in the spirit of the Author of the Universe, in the spirit of

order. It worships truth and beauty." "The mass of people, who never think, understand little the trials of a superior mind which must think." "The greatest minds admit no biography. They are determined from within." "Christianity . . . a religion of benignant aspect, of a liberal spirit, of lofty purposes, given to free and enlarge the intellect, to form a higher order of character, a filial and elevating and unbounded charity, — and to indue the will with invincible strength in well-doing." "I have seldom, perhaps never, met a human being who seemed to me conscious of what was in him." "The common mode of speaking of prayer, as if it were mere asking, or did not include moral effort, seems to me very pernicious." "One of the beauties of Christ's character is his superiority to his miracles." "There is something more terrible than slavery, and that is the spirit that enslaves." "Flattery is never so sweet as when it gives us confidence in the possession of qualities in which we fail most, or, at least, about which we doubt most."

"There is such a thing as being slaves to our own *past good impressions*." "The best proof of a heaven to come is its dawning within us now." "I have thought that by analyzing a pain, I have been able to find an element of pleasure in it." "I cease to wonder that six thousand years have not done more for the race, when I see so clearly that a thousand years are but a day to the Eternal." This reminds one of Kepler. "'Solitude is sweet,' says a French writer, "but I want a friend to whom I can say 'solitude is sweet.'" "The old adage that sails profit nothing without ballast, we must remember. Unhappily some are all ballast, and go to the bottom; some of us are all sails and run adrift." "We visionaries, as we are called, have this privilege from living in the air, that the harsh sounds from earth make only a slight impression on the ear." "Time wears out the wrinkles on Mother Earth's brow. The world grows younger with age." "I feel more and more that love is better than thought, or, rather, that thought is worth little when not steeped in

love." "A good book might be written on the *art of suffering*." "I have great faith in inspiration; but it is a fruit and reward of faithful toil, not a chance influence entirely out of our power." "Sects are apt to hate each other in proportion to their proximity. The old proverb, that two of a trade can never agree, applies to religion as strongly as to common life." "Do not waste your breath in wailing over the times. Strive to make them better." "There seems a fatality attending creeds. After burdening Christianity with mysteries of which it is as innocent as the unborn child, they have generally renounced the real mystery of religion, that of human nature."

Truth, not Effect, Channing's Aim. — But literary taste in the shaping of expression was always subordinated and made subservient by Channing to moral purposes, and the yearning to benefit humanity. Of course he would be reproached by those who did not know his physical condition and his inner aims and aspirations,

as a self-indulgent dilettante and sentimentalist, or dreamer and visionary; but "in truth," — as Dr. Bartol finely says, "infirmity, seclusion, tender cherishing, and susceptibility to external influences only disguised in him, to most, the all-daring courage, all-enduring patience, of the martyr."

Was Channing Self-indulgent? — Channing is a noble example of the power of patient self-study and self-discipline to make a man an efficient servant of truth and benefactor of his race. He has been reproached with individualism. What is so stigmatized was really the wise, reverent, and spiritual economy of an invalid, who would save his strength to devote it in the way he best could to the cause of truth, virtue, and humanity. What Mr. Calvert finely says of Socrates may be applied to Channing: "Self-centred, not self-seeking." Channing's love of nature was no mere sensuous or selfish enjoyment. It seems almost as if he himself were speaking through his brother Gannett, when

the latter, writing in 1834, during a wedding journey, says: "There is a spirituality in this beauty of the material world which I cannot resist. It addresses the spiritual in man. It awakens in him the consciousness of a nature born to enjoy the lovely. This nature cannot be doomed to decay. My faith in immortality has gained strength amidst God's glorious works." How singularly in Channing's style and spirit is this! He himself somewhere says: "I sometimes think that I have a peculiar enjoyment of a fine atmosphere. *It is to me a spiritual pleasure*, rather than physical, and seems to me not unworthy our future existence." And he, too, could say, "I love not man the less" for these interviews with nature. "If I have gone to solitudes," he somewhere says, indeed, "it was not to sigh among shades, but to use my little power as well as I could. To me the country is the best article in the *materia medica*." And again he says: "I have never found that my lonely way of life has alienated me from my race. On the contrary, I think that to me it

has been the spring or nutriment of philanthropy."

Channing's Individualism.—Independently, however, of his feeling the necessity of solitude and nature for their sanitary influences and for studies which required intense and concentrated meditation, Channing, no doubt, would have adopted his secluded mode of life, his individualism, as it is sometimes disparagingly designated, on *principle*, that is, because he felt that for the very reason of being but a part of a great human and divine whole, every man should strive to make himself a *perfect* part; in other words, to perfect himself in the way that his knowledge of his peculiar aptitudes and abilities taught him would be for him the best. In the case of a Channing, individualism meant not indifference, but independence. And not inappropriate to his monument would be the words Robert Burns wrote to be inscribed on an altar to Independence: —

"Thou of an independent mind,
With soul resolved, with soul resigned;
Prepared power's proudest frown to brave,
Who wilt not be — nor have — a slave;
Virtue alone who dost revere;
Thine own reproach alone dost fear; —
Approach this shrine and worship here."

His Natural Religion. — Channing was undoubtedly and emphatically, in a certain sense, the disciple and the earnest advocate of a Natural Religion. It was part of his evening worship to stand at his window and watch the sunset sky over the Brighton hills. Not that he worshipped Nature in the pagan or pantheistic sense, but that he loved to join with Nature in the worship she silently pays to the Maker and Father of all things. Rather let us say, he saw, in the tender and majestic procession of Nature's shows, signallings and salutations from the great Unseen hidden behind them, and with Him through faith held sweet inward communion. To him the song of the bird, the music of the wind in the branches, "the breezy call of incense-breathing morn,"

all were voices of the Spirit talking with the spirit in man. The streaming of the northern lights was to him a lovely apparition, and the surf-drum on the seashore and the leap of the manèd billows woke in him a child's delight and awe. The freedom and familiarity which he rarely, if ever, manifested with human beings, he indulged with these unconscious creatures of God. With them the bounds of his natural reserve gave way; and this rapture in the companionship of the creation and the Creator grew with him to the last. As Theodore Parker so beautifully says: "He found God everywhere, not only in the church, but wherever his foot trod; in the sounds of ocean, where God holds in the waters with a leash of sand; in the bloom of the crocus beside his doorstep in winter; in the ribs and veins of a leaf; in the sounds of nature, so full of poetry, — the grass, the leaves, the drowsy beetle, the contented kine; in the summer wind, that came to the window at nightfall and played in the ringlets of his children's hair; in the light that

mantles o'er the western sky, as the sun goes down; in the fires that shine there, beautiful creatures, all night long; in the star that anticipates the day, which looked gently through his window, consoling him for the loss of sleep. There was no 'trail of the serpent' over all this. Nature, too, was to him a religion, pure and undefiled."

Charge of Sentimentalism. — Channing has been often spoken of disparagingly as a sentimentalist and an optimist, as one who wilfully or in innocent ignorance looked only on the pleasant side of life and human nature and the Divine character, — as one who in his light barque kept near shore and never ventured into the deep waters. "He had never," says one of his latest critics, "experienced in himself any flagrant outbreaking of sin; he had never wrestled in mortal agony with any sensual propensity." Well, had Jesus himself? But did *he* not suffer *with* as well as *for* sinners? And how shall we say, then, that any being cannot

sorrow for sin without having experienced the agony of remorse? Can any one have read Channing's sermon on the Evil of Sin, who calls him superficial in his dealing with human life? The deep waters of thought are precisely those on which Channing did stretch his sail, in the assured confidence that God's infinite and paternal providence extended everywhere, and that no error of mind or of will could carry a child of his beyond the reach of his love, his pity, or his care. And in all conceivable cases he felt sure that the Father's chastisements would have a corrective design. If this was optimism, it was the optimism of Paul.

The German poet Rückert has beautifully expressed the same thought in his "Strung Pearls" as rendered by Dr. Frothingham: —

"The father feels the blow, when he corrects his son;
But when thy heart is loose, rigor 's a kindness done.

. . . . .

From the sun's searching power can vagrant planets rove?
How then can wandering man fall wholly from God's love?"

Channing was a Self-made Man. — This does not mean that he was not acted upon by out-

ward influences. In that sense no man ever was or could be self-made. The meaning is, that in his case the reaction from within met and equalled the action from without. The native power and propension of the soul guided the stream of influence coming in upon it to congenial issues. Herein lay the originality of the man, — not in utter independence of foreign supplies, but in the conversion of them to uses of his own, — the only originality possible to man in this world.

Channing's Use of the Word "I." — Much account has been made of what is called *egotism* in Channing. But how superficially and with what want of discrimination this charge is often made against such men! The first person singular may express far more modesty than the first person plural. Nothing is more arrogantly egotistic, often, than the critic's "we;" nothing more unassuming than the "I" of the truth-seeking and truth-speaking man. Channing's so-called egotism was simply individuality and

independence. He had caught his egotism from communion with Jesus, or rather from the spirit that dwelt in them both. When he writes in the preface to his first published volume, "The times demanded that a voice of strength and courage should be lifted up, and I rejoice that I was found among those by whom it was uttered and sent far and wide," it was in no spirit of boasting that he said this; he was thinking simply of the strength of faith and truth, and rejoicing before God that grace had been given him to be one of the instruments of clearing away the mist of sophistry from the eyes of men.

One reason, too, of Channing's frequent use of "I," undoubtedly, was his wishing to have it fully understood that in his expression of opinion he spoke for himself only and not for any party.

Was Channing a Great Man? — A great deal is always vaguely said upon a question like this. Great in what faculty, what quality? one might rejoin. Great in degree or in kind? one might again ask, if the question refers to greatness in

general. And again, is the word "greatness" used here in a positive or only a comparative sense? In a letter to Lucy Aikin, near the centenary of Washington's birth, Channing himself writes: "Washington is the most remarkable man of modern times; not that he surpassed all in ability, for it is a question among us yet whether he can be called *great* in regard to intellect." It is curious to reflect that a similar question may arise in some minds in regard to Channing himself at this hundredth anniversary of his birth. It has been said that he was not great, but good. Shall we content ourselves with saying, then, that he was *greatly good?* We will rather say that his was the best kind of greatness. If, indeed, a man may be

"The *greatest*, wisest, *meanest* of mankind,"

the kind of greatness there implied we should not care to claim for Channing, nor the *wisdom* either. But if one of the grandest kinds of greatness is to be growing freer and broader, loftier and more ardent in aspiration, as one

grows in years, more and more like a child in the presence of God and the prospect of eternity, then we confidently pronounce Channing a great man.

If greatness means completeness, so far, perhaps, we may acknowledge Channing's limitations. His biographer intimates that he may have been "kept from the highest [rather the broadest] goodness by his love of rectitude;" but with great diffidence would we venture such criticism, not knowing that what he lost in one direction he may not have gained in another.

Often, indeed, would he himself tell us, in his last years, that if he had his life to live over again, he would mix more with men, would mingle more in the stir of busy and social life. But we say now, *it is best* as it was.

Those who deny or disparage Dr. Channing's greatness sometimes allege his want of that humor which is an essential element of a large and vigorous manhood. Whether *on the whole*, with more health and humor, he would have given the world an example of so large, lofty,

and profound a humanity, may well be doubted. Better is it that we should be content and grateful for what he was. Certain it is that he presents a wonderful example of a man who, in spite of that want of health which almost perforce keeps the humorous element in abeyance, maintained a serene, cheerful, and happy temper, that, according to the testimony of those nearest him, grew more and more serene and sunny as life waned. His son says: "His last years were more than peaceful. They were irradiated by a calm, deep joy, which it is beautiful to remember. His mind was very active, and he worked to the extent of his strength. Yet in work and in enforced rest alike, was this happiness conspicuous, which far exceeded simple content. He was one of the happiest persons, if not the happiest, I ever knew." His son also says, speaking of his father's abstinence, as being far from *asceticism*, that "sensation was the avenue to him always of the spiritual correspondences of nature. He enjoyed vividly the harmonies of color, sound, form,

and all the beauties of nature; yet they always carried to him their inmost spiritual meaning."

So far as health of body is necessary to make a whole man, Channing, we may admit, was imperfect. "However," in one of his letters he modestly says, "it is a comfort to know, that where there is a fervent heart and a strong purpose, much may be done with a weak body." And marvellous, indeed, it is that one who, as his nephew asserts, never knew a day of freedom from pain, weariness, or infirmity, from the beginning of his ministry, should have been able to enjoy and to accomplish so much, to work with so much serenity and so much success, and to leave behind him such a rich bequest of calm, profound, ennobling thoughts.

Was Channing a Philosopher? — If to be a philosopher means to be a great metaphysical system-builder, then we may readily grant that he was not eminently such. But if we take the original sense of the term philosophy, namely, love of wisdom, then surely Channing was a

philosopher indeed, for, as Coleridge said of him, he had "the love of wisdom and the wisdom of love." As a man of learning he does not belong to the first rank, but in the school of true wisdom, in this philosophy Channing was certainly a master. Whether he had *a* philosophy or not (and perhaps, if the critic cannot find one in him which he can define, it is *his* defect, not Channing's), he certainly had *philosophy* in the best sense, even in that of St. Augustine, who somewhere says, "If God is wisdom, then the lover of God is the true philosopher."

Channing's Unfinished Work on Man. — During the last year of his life Channing was busy with gathering up and arranging his thoughts for a great work on the nature and destiny of man. He lived to finish only five chapters, which are taken up with a philosophy of sensation, conception, consciousness, and memory. These chapters were carefully written out, and will soon be published. They will exhibit Chan-

ning in a new light, as presenting, in scientific statement, moral and spiritual truths and principles, upon which all his preaching and his philanthropic writings had been based. He is still preaching, with a calm, philosophic clearness, and with a lucid simplicity that makes his thought and argument intelligible to common-sense, and unencumbered by the technicalities of the schools. Pre-eminent and remarkable throughout the fragment is the idealism, the spirituality of the doctrine. The body is the occasion, not the cause, of sensation. "It is I (the soul) that see and hear." Because an idea — of space, for instance — follows a sensation, it is not therefore the effect of it. Yet the power comes from God. We must assume his immediate and ever-present energy. The miller lifts the sluice, and the wheels begin to move; the stream that moves them is the flow of Divine power.

The idea of power — of causation, for instance — according to Channing is of spiritual origin. All the ideas, in short, which have been

so often derived from sensation, "have their origin in the mind. The source is within. The outward creation is revealed to us by our own souls."

It is interesting to meet in these pages a personal reference in the illustration of the writer's favorite theory of the spiritual and creative character of sensation. "May I say that now, when the creation has become a familiar sight, and my eye has grown dim, the earth and the heavens expand before me into new greatness. It is the soul which aggrandizes nature."

The spiritual view here presented of the nature of sensation and of the ideas to which it gives occasion strikingly coincides with a train of thought in Max Müller's last lectures on the origin and growth of the religious idea in man. For instance, he says: "We distinguish between sense and reason, though even these two are, in the highest sense, different functions only of the same conscious self." Again, referring to the transcendental idea of infinity, he says: "Our very idea of a limit implies the idea

of a beyond, and thus forces the idea of the infinite upon us, whether we like it or not."

In the ideas of this philosophic bequest of Channing's, there may be no novelty now (Lavollaye remarks "the *naïveté* of some of his doctrines, which he thinks new, and which could not pass for discoveries except in America"), but in the spirit and style of the presentation there is something fresh, individual, and singularly attractive. How refreshing it is, too, what a presentiment of immortality it gives us, to find one who with such a fervent spirit in such a frail frame has devoted the years of his manhood to the labors of the pulpit and the great moral, social, and political questions and crises of the hour, sitting down in his last days in the chair of science, and with youthful ardor addressing himself to the examination, in the light of reason and philosophy, of the questions, what man is made of, and what he is made *for;* to the task of resuming and reinforcing by scientific inductions, the great doctrine of the dignity and the divinity of our origin, nature, and destiny!

ARTOTYPE J. A. WILLIAMS, NEWPORT R. I.

In Christ's Church, Oxford, there is a memorial tablet to Bishop Berkeley, bearing an inscription which might with equal felicity be transferred to Channing: —

"Si Christianus fueris,
Si amans patriæ,
Utroque nomine gloriari potes
Berkleium vixisse."

"If thou art a Christian;
If a lover of thy country;
Under both names thou canst glory
That CHANNING has lived."

And here this most inadequate tribute to the memory of our spiritual friend and father shall close. And how can we close more fitly than in the words he himself wrote after the death of his friends Follen and Tuckerman: "But we will not say we have lost such friends. They live within us in sweet and tender remembrances. They live around us in the fruits of their holy labors. They live above us, and call us, in the tones of a friendship which heaven has refined, to strengthen our union with them by sharing their progress in truth and virtue."

Lines read in the Unitarian Church at Newport on the Ninety-ninth Anniversary of Channing's Birth.

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING.

BORN IN NEWPORT, APRIL 7, 1780.

A CENTURY'S close is drawing nigh,
The hundredth year has now begun,
Since, in the softening April sky,
The lustre of the vernal sun,

Sending his radiant beams abroad,
To bid a new creation rise,
Fell, like the loving look of God,
Upon a new-born infant's eyes.

We stand amid the scenes to-day,
Where Channing's wondering childhood saw
The signs of God's mysterious way,
And learned to love his holy law.

Here first his heart drank in the light
Of God's benign and tender face,
And glowed with rapture at the sight
Of Nature's loveliness and grace.

Here first he breathed the ocean air,
The headland cliff exultant trod,
And felt a spirit everywhere,
And saw the step of Nature's God.

And as he trod the sounding shore,
And gazed on ocean's billowy roll,
The music of that deep-toned roar
With awe and transport thrilled his soul.

His bosom, heaving with the sea,
  Exulted in the glorious din;
The elemental energy
  Woke answering energy within.

In many a lone and holy hour
  Of rapturous self-communion there,
He felt within the peace and power
  That issue from the fount of prayer.

And in the broad blue sky above,
  In the large look of Nature, then,
He felt the greatness of God's love
  Rebuke the narrow creeds of men.

Communing there with Nature's word,
  Beside the vast and solemn sea,
With awe profound his spirit heard
  The holy hymn of Liberty.

That mighty ocean still rolls on,
  Still sounds that deep, mysterious roar;
But he long since from earth has gone,
  He walks another brighter shore.

He breathes the air of purer skies;
  A generation now has passed
Since peacefully his failing eyes
  On autumn's glory looked their last.

His voice has gone o'er all the earth,
  While — O strange ways of earthly fame! —
Here, in the place that gave him birth,
  Are those who never heard his name.

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING.

Men come from foreign lands to seek
  The shrines that grace this ancient town;
With reverent love his name they speak,
  Attesting his world-wide renown.

They wander on from street to street,
  And marvel, as they gaze around,
No monumental stone to meet, —
  No hill-top with his image crowned.

And, with full heart, we too reply:
  "Ask ye a monument? Look round!"[1]
Here, while we name him, he is nigh,
  He makes this hill a holy ground.

These walls his kindling voice have heard, —
  Once, in the bloom and fire of youth,
And when, in later years, his word
  Wore the calm majesty of truth.

I see him now, — his pale cheek seems
  Transparent to the soul's warm light,
And the clear eye, dilating, beams
  As if his faith were turned to sight.

And many a soul that felt the thrill
  That look through heart and conscience sent
Burns with the flame it kindled still,
  And is his living monument.

But chiefly on the glowing page
  His mind a monument hath wrought,
That shall endure from age to age,
  Lit with the sunny beam of thought.

[1] An allusion to the epitaph on Sir Christopher Wren in St. Paul's Church, London: "Si monumentum requiris, circumspice!"

There, with immortal fervor warm,
  Shall rise an image of the man,
That shall express the spirit's form
  As neither stone nor canvas can.

Though the frail form, in years long gone,
  Faded and fled from mortal sight,
And darkness veiled the eyes that shone
  Illumined by the soul's pure light,

That light still lives, that life breathes power,
  The age still feels its holy thrill;
That voice is heard in trial's hour,
  To nerve the weak and wavering will.

While the great truths and precepts, taught
  By Jesus, human souls engage;
While the deep problems of man's thought
  Still stir and agitate the age,—

No time shall come, when Channing's name
  Shall grow less bright on Freedom's scroll,
Or cease to light the holy flame
  Of faith and virtue in the soul.

And surely here, where field and shore
  Seem waiting still his step to hear,
And, musing where the breakers roar,
  We feel his spirit breathing near,—

Here, where the broad and chainless sea,
  The blue sky bending from above,
Confirm the gospel, large and free,
  He preached, of God's impartial love,—

Shall pious hands, in coming days,
  And grateful hearts from far and near,
Some not unfit memorial raise,
  To thoughtful souls for ever dear;

Where children's children, year by year,
  The voice of praise and prayer shall swell,
And feel the Father's presence near,
  In whom the saints for ever dwell.

C. T. B.

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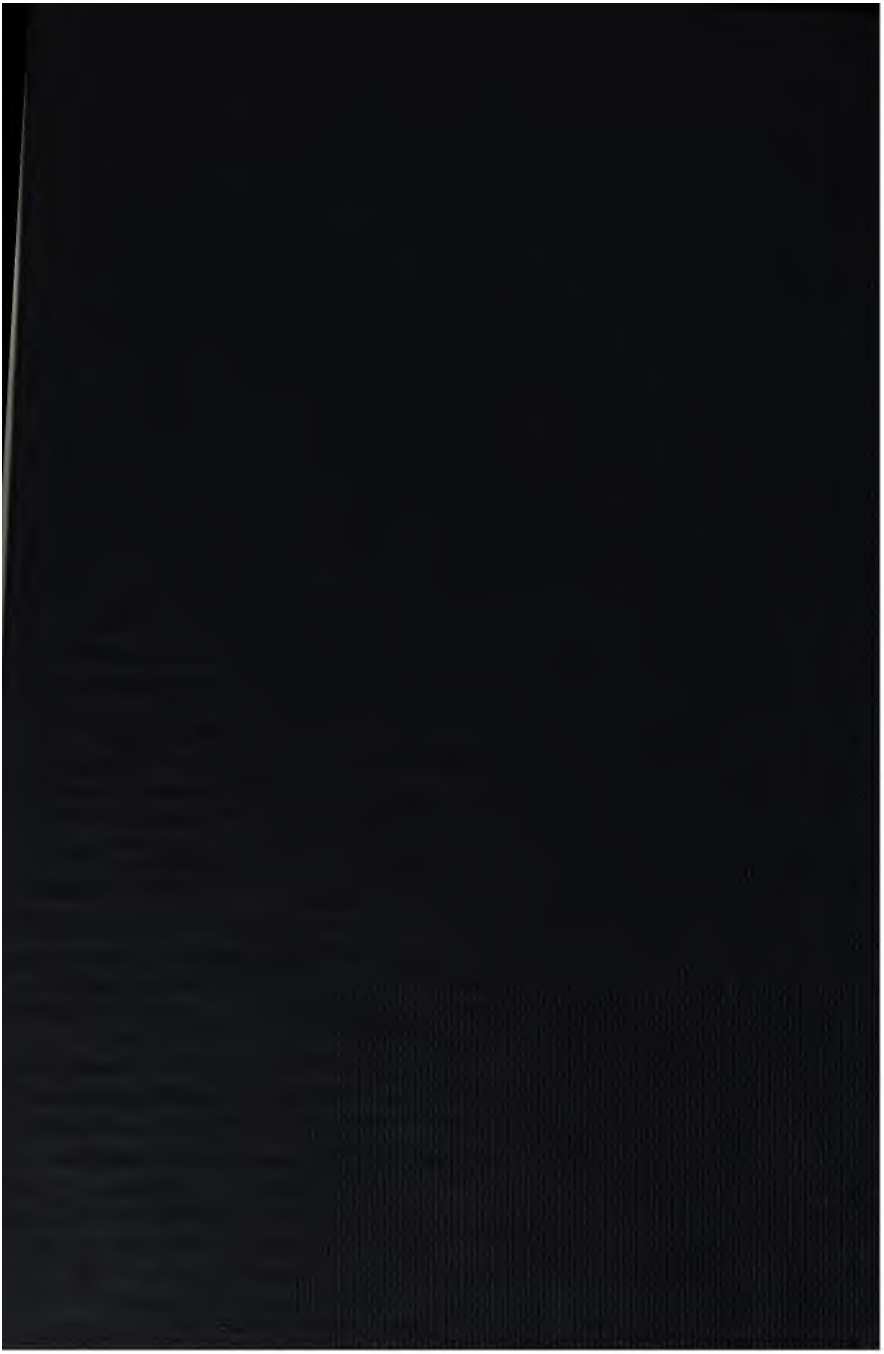
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